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TRUTH



&TALES

Cultural Mobility and Medieval Media

Edited by

FIONA SOMERSET

and

NICHOLAS WATSON

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INTERVENTIONS: NEW STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL CULTURE
Ethan Knapp, Series Editor

Truth and Tales

Cultural Mobility and Medieval Media

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FIONA SOMERSET &
NICHOLAS WATSON



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The two editors, in company with eleven of the scholars who together wrote this book, dedicate it with respect and fondness to its twelfth contributor, Richard Firth Green: friend, colleague, teacher, mentor, model.

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P R E F A C E

NICHOLAS WATSON AND FIONA SOMERSET

his book was conceived and written by colleagues and students of Richard Firth Green, the book's dedicatee and honorand of the conference from which it developed: "Truth and Tales: Medieval Popular Culture and the Written Word," held at the Canada Chaucer Seminar at the Centre for Medieval Studies in Toronto in April 2012. After Oxford, the University of Toronto is Richard's alma mater, and he himself spent much of his career in Canada, at Mount Allison University, the University of British Columbia, Bishop's University, and the University of Western Ontario, where he taught for two decades before moving to The Ohio State University in 2002 as Humanities Distinguished Professor of English. A towering figure on the Canadian and American medieval scenes, it is fitting that he should be celebrated in a book grounded in a Toronto conference but published by The Ohio State University Press in its important new series *Interventions: New Studies in Medieval Culture*. Given the breadth of Richard's interests and influence, not to mention his gregariousness, it is also fitting that the contributors to this book are a diverse group, including not only past and present department colleagues from Ohio State and the University of Western Ontario and former students but scholars with no relationship to either university.

Although all of us would reckon ourselves among those touched by his scholarship, we are also a diverse group intellectually. Richard's work has made its mark on a rather high proportion of the historicist work published in Middle English studies for well over thirty years. Yet it is one of his distinguishing characteristics that he has always preferred to cultivate his own garden, quietly influencing those around him and aware of their work but not

seeking to lay down a method for others to follow, let alone to found a school. The scholars who most influenced him have mostly been from outside Middle English—apart, perhaps, from his Oxford tutor, John Burrow, and a few others of that generation, including George Rigg. In the case of his brilliant first book, *Poets and Princepleasers*, these included cultural historians such as Owen Barfield. In that of his great second book, *A Crisis of Truth*, and much of what has (so far) come after, they have included anthropologists, especially Jack Goody, and scholars of orality, especially Walter Ong, Brian Stock, and Michael Clanchy. All his work is indebted to French social historians, notably the “Annalists,” Georges Duby and Jacques le Goff, and some of it also to their Russian counterpart, Aron Gurevich. Those whom Richard has guided as students or colleagues will know the frequency and admiration with which names like these come up in conversation. But his advice, even when he will give it directly, most often has the effect of deepening one’s existing methods of thought and work, not pulling it in the direction he might himself wish to follow. The result for this book, whose contributors seek to honor Richard by presenting him with something that emerges from their own work, not a pastiche of his, is a wider variety of approaches than perhaps typical of the *festschrift* genre.

Even the book’s title bespeaks the results of his demand that others think for themselves. Only its first half, *Truth and Tales*, which explicitly alludes to *A Crisis of Truth*, is directly redolent of his work, acknowledging the strong impression that book makes on many chapters of this one, as well as noticing, allusively, the two books’ interest in the transmission and transformation of authoritative materials across the boundaries of time, culture, language, and genre. The title’s second half, *Cultural Mobility and Medieval Media*, broadens the object of the book’s interest out into various contiguous fields, not all of which have been cultivated by Richard, among them social history, book history, vernacular studies, and media studies. Here emphasis falls on the continuities, communalities, and negotiations that linked what are still too often called the “high” and “low” cultures of the later Middle Ages, rather than on transformations or divides. Of course, Richard has himself written about such continuities often; his chapter here is a fine case in point. But as they till their own several patches, his fellow contributors are properly aware that there is nothing else here much like anything Richard himself would have written, or perhaps wanted to write, and that this fact makes no difference either to the debt that the book and its contributors owe him, nor to our anticipation that he will read its chapters with his customary alertness, sometimes annoyingly finding treasures the authors themselves had failed to notice were there.



A *festschrift* should really feature a photograph of its honorand, but the only one we have, while poignantly pertinent in its way, is hardly to be put on general show. Taken on a dusty picnic afternoon at the New Chaucer Society in Colorado in 2002, the hills actually on fire just offstage, the photograph features the two editors standing one on each side of Richard, arm in arm, all three of us hot, underclad, pleased, but also mysteriously mournful. There is a trace of redness, possibly even a tear. Richard himself, who has earlier that day given the biennial Chaucer lecture on the arguably autobiographical topic of the word “elvishe,” looks the part as always and has a hint of triumph in his eye. But the strong note the scene strikes is of a somewhat disheveled melancholy. An opportunistic reunion snap, the photograph marks the emergence of the institutional configuration that brought this book about. During the later 1990s, the three of us had been colleagues at the University of Western Ontario, with Jane Toswell, and had left the university within not much more than a year: Richard to Ohio State, the two of us to other new jobs. As one does in this process, each of us had gained a good deal, but also suffered loss, not least in the editors’ case that of the regular intellectual companionship of Richard. It is still nearly too sad to look at.

A more suitable photograph, if one happened to exist, would feature Richard flanked, now, by bookshelves, in his roomy office at Western in 1997 or early 1998, just as *A Crisis of Truth* was finished. Taken out of necessity from just inside the door, this hypothetical image captures him in an armchair in front of the window, a computer off to one side, writing methodically and apparently unhurriedly, once again with that hint of triumph. Being a thing of but a single sense, the photograph is ignorant that loudspeakers are broadcasting a ballad, sung in flat tones by a singer from somewhere in the north of England, who spurs Richard onward by calling to mind, perhaps, the continued investment of the present in the medieval past, the ties that bind now to then. Since the photograph is taken from a distance, it may also be blind to the fact that he is, in fact, working hell for leather. But it cannot fail to notice the towers of books and photocopies that dominate the foreground and bar the way forward: great tottering archipelagos, some almost two feet high, leaning across one another companionably, even drunkenly: texts or portions of texts in English, Latin, and French; articles in half a dozen languages from a hundred different journals and written across a hundred years; the still fertile sediment of more than a decade of research.

These piles hold Richard’s raw materials, and they are more organized than they at first look. Indeed, if you were to push your way across the room

as pictured, perhaps to collect from his hand the latest offprint of one of the dozens of articles spun off from the book, you might realize yourself to be literally threading your way between chapters and their footnotes: “Trothplight,” “Rash Promises,” “Bargains with God.” Soon after the final proofs are sent to the publisher, they will be gone and an eerie decorousness will descend, before new piles slowly begin to grow a new book, just in time to be transplanted to a new office, at Ohio State—where, as the twenty-first-century Internet reorganizes research habits, parts of the piles will slowly become digital, no longer visible to the naked eye. In the meantime, the crowded, nonexistent image can serve as a reminder of what it was impossible to avoid wanting to learn from Richard: the disciplined care, the openness to evidence, the respect for every fragment of the surviving record, the willingness to do what it takes to find out what can be found out and think through its significance. It is our privilege to know him and to have the chance to dedicate this book to him.

INTRODUCTION

FIONA SOMERSET

It is a familiar irony that the churl's tale told by Chaucer's Miller is a sparkling literary gem, exquisitely paced and pitched even as it is performed, we are told, by a working man too drunk to sit upright or speak clearly. It is theologically witty despite its teller's and its main character's disclaiming of interest in "Goddess pryvetee"; and it brilliantly parodies the Knight's dolefully interminable exploration of the workings of "aventure" with the counterproposal that what we get, whether or not this seems fair to us, is the direct result of our habits and choices. The Miller has violated social decorum, as well as the tale-telling contract established in the General Prologue, defying the Host by insistently interposing himself after the Knight in place of the higher-ranking Monk; yet the tale's conclusion reinforces social hierarchies as the whole town joins in mocking a carpenter's simplicity and accepting the explanation of events agreed upon, seemingly miraculously, by all the clerks.¹

Familiar, again, is the way Chaucer complicates our understanding of the tale and its teller still further in the authorial apology for *The Canterbury Tales* as a whole that concludes the Miller's Prologue, one of the most famous passages in his poetry:

What sholde I moore seyn, but this Millere
He nolde his wordes for no man forbere,

1. Quotations of Chaucer are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), with subsequent references by fragment and line number.

But tolde his cherles tale in his manere.
 M'athynketh that I shal reherce it heere.
 And therfore every gentil wight I preye,
 For Goddes love, demeth nat that I seye
 Of yvel entente, but for I moot reherce
 Hir tales alle, be they bettre or werse,
 Or elles falsen som of my mateere.
 And therfore, whoso list it nat yheere,
 Turne over the leef and chese another tale;
 For he shal fynde ynowe, grete and smale,
 Of storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse,
 And eek moralitee and hoolynesse.
 Blameth nat me if that ye chese amys.
 The Millere is a cherl; ye knowe wel this.
 So was the Reve eek and othere mo,
 And harlotrie they tolden bothe two.
 Avyseth yow, and put me out of blame;
 And eek men shal nat maken ernest of game. (I.3167–86)

Chaucer defends himself here against the imputation of evil intent on the grounds of his obligation to truth, in this case defined as accurate representation (“I moot reherce”) of his “mateere.” Readers are of course entirely aware that the oral performance purportedly rendered in writing before their eyes is itself a fabrication. Even more than his implicit claim that his written text represents speech (“I seye”), Chaucer’s directive that readers whom it does not please to *hear* the tale should turn the *page* (3176–77) collapses supposed boundaries between oral performance, written rendition, and their audiences. He proleptically embraces his readers within the Miller’s Tale’s exposition of just (or unjust) deserts by warning them to blame themselves, not him, if they choose to read it. By protesting too much, he courts their skepticism that a tale told by a “cherl” can be so readily dismissed out of hand (3182–84), and similarly that his seeming afterthought, the opposition between “ernest” and “game,” is as straightforward as he makes out (3186).

It is scarcely a new insight, then, that medieval learned and popular, oral and textual, or high and low cultures might intermingle or combine rather than remaining simply opposed; that this mixing might facilitate rather than impede the transmission of ideas and beliefs; or that their purported truth might be conveyed through entertaining stories as much as through instructional treatises.² Indeed, it was scarcely a new insight even for Chaucer and

2. For the oppositions themselves, see Herbert Grundmann, “Litteratus, illiteratus: der Wandel einer Bildungsnorm von Altertum zum Mittelalter,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 40

his contemporaries. However, appreciation for this complexity has gained new purchase in the last few years. Widespread critical interest in discovering circulation, mobility, and negotiation where a previous generation might have emphasized fixity, hierarchy, and the stability of truths perceived as absolute has impelled us to develop a greater range of skills in analyzing the media and discursive contexts through which truths are conveyed.³ We are no longer satisfied merely to demonstrate *that* things moved; that voices dissented from what had seemed univocal certainties. We now want to describe where and how and by what means truth moves: in what oral testimony, what publicly displayed symbols, what texts written by whom and circulated and copied in what formats and through what channels; what genres and kinds and mixtures of talk and writing. And we want to know what changes as truth moves—we no longer assume (even if this is sometimes the case) that movement and voices change nothing, inverting the established social order only temporarily or superficially.⁴ Indeed, Richard Firth Green has argued, through a series of brilliantly executed case studies, that the concept of “truth” itself underwent an uneasy yet fundamental transition in the later medieval period in England: from what he calls sense 2, where “truth” inheres in social bonds reinforced by formal promises, legal and otherwise, to sense 1, where “truth” is ratified by conformity to states of affairs in the world.⁵ In the period covered

(1958): 1–65. For surveys of development since, see D. H. Green, “Orality and Reading: The State of Research in Medieval Studies,” *Speculum* 65 (1990): 267–80; Charles F. Briggs, “Literacy, Reading, and Writing in the Medieval West,” *Journal of Medieval History* 26 (2000): 397–420; M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 3rd ed. (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), especially Clanchy’s new postscript, pp. 336–43.

3. See the much-controverted D. W. Robertson Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 51; but see also Steven Justice, “Who Stole Robertson?” *PMLA* 124 (2009): 609–15, which (perhaps a bit unfairly) points to the persistence of homogeneous characterizations of the Middle Ages in the work of the next generation (p. 612).

4. See Stephen J. Greenblatt’s account of “subversion” and “containment” in “Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and Its Subversion,” in *Glyph: Johns Hopkins Textual Studies* 8, ed. Walter Benn Michaels (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp. 40–61 (this the original version; but it has been revised and reprinted several times). On the mixed reception of Greenblatt’s work, see Paul Stevens, “Pretending to Be Real: Stephen Greenblatt and the Legacy of Popular Existentialism,” *New Literary History* 33.3 (2002): 491–519. Consider also Mikhail Bakhtin’s “carnavalesque,” for example, in *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), and see n. 10 below.

5. Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). The *Middle English Dictionary* (MED) devotes sections 1 through 8 of its definition of “treuthe” to sense 2, which ranges from personal loyalty to moral virtue to religious faith, and sections 9 through 13 to sense 1, ranging from reality to accuracy to veracity in speech to rectitude in testimony or judgment. The truths that a community agrees are self-evident (e.g., moral principles), or that they think can only be ratified by belief in things unseen (e.g., religious faith), may only be partly accounted for by these senses, but do fit roughly under sense 2.

by the chapters of this book, and arguably on into the present, these senses operate side by side, and often in tension.

Thus, these chapters are far from unique, amidst current scholarship, in their wish to complicate simple oppositions between learned and popular, written and oral, clergy and laity. And they are far from unusual in agreeing that the truths that persons and communities arrive upon are transactional rather than absolute, the product of discussion and debate. Where they converge, and become distinctive, is in their effort to unfurl the implications of a more complex model of interaction in ways that account for both the affective charge, the centripetal force, of truth claims in any instance, and Green's insight into the tension at their basis. If truths move, if even the basis on which they are decided is unstable, then in what ways is a tale like the Miller's, or for that matter like any of the tales recounted or analyzed in this volume, a vehicle for their negotiation?

That tales convey what their tellers and audiences regard as truth is something no literary scholar would deny, and nor would any historian, even if either scholar might be skeptical that the concept of "truth" furthers a particular analysis or uninterested in narrative as a mode of engagement with the past. Yet from its earliest recorded usages in the English language, "tale" has had a far broader and more variable definition than we might expect: it encompasses a dizzying array of material, oral, and written media and discursive modes for conveying information.⁶ A notched tally-stick whose import is as obvious to a peasant as to his lord, just as much as a handwritten account book employed in a literate gentry household, might provide a "tale" in the sense of a count, or tally, or *that by which* one calculates or reckons (*MED*, s.v. "tale," def. 7f). The oral rendition of a romance after a group supper, just as much as a legal plea in court or a disputation conducted in a college hall,

6. In Old English: talu: 1. a tale, talk, story, account; 2. a talk, discussion, dispute; 3. a charge, claim; 4. an excuse, a defence; 5. as a law term, a case, an action; 6. a tale, list, series. Entry condensed to definitions only: derived from *Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. "talū," November 18, 2010, <http://www.bosworthtoller.com/030197> (accessed July 25, 2013). In Middle English: tale (n.): 1. the oral or written relation of an event or a series of events purporting to be true, a personal narrative; 2. a set or formal narrative, oral or written, of events that occurred or are believed to have occurred in the past; a story which may be fictive but which illustrates moral truth; a story with a consciously invented plot; 3. the act of speaking; discourse, talk; also, language; 4. an assertion; also, an argument; a protest; an accusation; a complaint; 5. a conversation; a topic of conversation; a debate, disputation; 7. a numerical quantity; a frequency; a group of persons; a tally; also, that by which one calculates or reckons; 8. estimation of value; 9. blame; 10. reasoning, reckoning. Entry condensed and summarized, with some miscellaneous subentries removed: derived from Hans Kurath, Sherman Kuhn, et al., *Electronic Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. "tale," April 24, 2013, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/> (accessed July 25, 2013). Henceforth cited as *MED*.

might compel its listeners' attention (*MED*, s.v. "tale," defs. 1a, 2a, 3, 4c, 5c). An expository description, just as much as a fictional narrative, might be circulated and recopied in handwritten or printed form among expected as well as unanticipated readers, and recited aloud or memorized as well as read silently (*MED*, s.v. "tale," defs. 1, 2, 3d). The broadened sense of what individuals in a given culture might understand as a "tale" afforded by this historical perspective suggests that the medieval past still has much to contribute to our understanding of the present, even in what we think of as a far more interconnected and interactive world where digital media often (not invariably) ensure that information can be conveyed almost instantaneously. For what we can learn depends crucially, even now, on what we are willing to attend to, and on the extent to which we allow it to surprise us—not less, on our access to the media by which it is conveyed.⁷ The late-medieval understanding of "tale" we learn from its usage in Old and Middle English (as well as the related usages in Old Norse, Middle High German, Old French, Anglo-Norman, and other languages that medieval speakers of English used or encountered) pushes us to account for multidirectional interactions between media and social groups who are expert in their use, rather than exiguous communication between higher and lower spheres.⁸ Since "tale" in this new understanding encompasses discursive modes in which "truth" is very differently defined—contrast, for example, legal testimony with romance, romance with religious instruction—our broadened understanding also enables us to examine how these modes work together, or alone, to lay claim to truth, typically through the

7. On attention, see the special issue of conference proceedings *Paying Attention*, ed. Patrick Crogan and Samuel Kinsley, *Culture Machine* 13 (2012). On wonder or surprise, see, among others, Martha Nussbaum, "Narrative Imagination," chap. 3 in *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997)—although Plato in the *Theaetetus* got there long before, as she well knows, followed by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* and Descartes in his *Passions of the Soul*. On the politics of meaningful access to digital media in a global culture of inequality, see the introductory overview in Martin Hilbert, "The End Justifies the Definition: The Manifold Outlooks on the Digital Divide and Their Practical Usefulness For Policy-Making," *Telecommunications Policy* 35.8 (2011): 715–36—although this is a rapidly developing field of inquiry in which survey articles date quickly. On forms of access to literate culture in the Middle Ages, see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the 11th and 12th Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); and Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*.

8. In Anglo-Norman, and to a greater extent Middle English, Germanic and Romance semantic fields merge and overlap, whereas in Old French, "taille" derives from "taillier," to cut or to decide or agree, and has a smaller semantic range, from the action of cutting, to a person's height, to an imposed tax, to a mark on a tally-stick. See A. J. Greimas, *Dictionnaire de l'ancien français* (Paris: Larousse, 1979, 1992), s.v. "taillier"; *The Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, s.vv. "taille," "tailler," <http://www.anglo-norman.net/> (accessed July 25, 2013). Cf. Middle English "tale," defs. 7 and 8, as well as 9 and 10, in n. 6 above; but cf. also *MED*, s.v. "taille" (n.).

conformity of their content with observable phenomena (recall Green's sense 1) or with the relationships between persons (his sense 2).

The hypermediation of our own lived experience in the present day is surely one reason why medievalists now attend more closely to the complex interplay between oral, written, performed, and material media in the cultures they study; between kinds of written record often considered distinct from one another such as the manuscript book, inscribed tablet, printed book, parchment roll, and handwritten quire; and between discursive modes as various yet finally inseparable as storytelling, historical account, dialogue, legislation, homiletics, lyric poetry, geographical or architectural description, public ritual, and performed song. But the case studies of "truth" conveyed through "tales" to be found in this volume also provide a new vantage point upon studies of culture and media in the present. They suggest that the interconnective web of communications through and between media and discursive modes that we all negotiate in daily life developed not from some previous unidirectional simplicity but from a communication network not unlike our own, if slower. And they show that careful reconstruction of how oral and written communication interact in the past can provide us with new models (even as present contexts in turn inform medievalists' models) for how oral culture is remediated in, but also mediates, what is written, read, felt, and remembered. Written texts, for example, recount scenes of oral performance in ways that give us more than, or something different from, just the words that were performed; but equally, these same written texts might themselves be read aloud, and in that performance might mimic or shadow the performance they report.⁹

Equally, these chapters give new impetus to studies of orality and folktales in the medieval past. Some such studies have sought to isolate for analysis the remnants within written literature of an oral culture of tale-telling separable from the written word. This endeavor remains worthwhile, but it gives rise to a self-limiting inquiry that determinedly looks away from the written artifacts that are typically its basis.¹⁰ Similarly, some studies have attempted to reconstruct the oral culture surrounding material artifacts like tally-sticks or pilgrim badges in ways that isolate that oral culture as an alternative or predecessor to written culture.¹¹ If we instead see these material artifacts as

9. On the concepts of hypermediation and remediation, see Jay David Boulter and Richard Grusin, "Remediation," *Configurations* 4.3 (1996): 311–58.

10. *Medieval Oral Literature*, ed. Karl Reichl (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), is a multi-authored comprehensive survey of periods and genres that marvelously epitomizes what this field of inquiry can achieve—all contributors emphasize the oral, but certainly, not all look away from writing with the same determination.

11. On the tally-stick, and for the best reproduction of his chosen photograph, see M. T.

media that interact with other media—as in Hanawalt’s chapter in this volume, where the symbol stamped on a loaf of bread indicates its conformity with a standard established in written documents and guaranteed through close monitoring by members of a local community—then we are better able to attend to the interplay between media, the modes and truth-claims they deploy, and the social status of the speakers and writers of those media. Our analysis of material artifacts inscribed with writing is correspondingly enriched. Especially since we now often work with their digital images, it can be easy to forget that not only written charms worn around the neck and broadsides hidden up the sleeve, but handwritten and printed books, are not merely media but things. They were manufactured, passed from hand to hand, held and manipulated and read aloud; and situated in relationships between persons whose gender, social status, and capabilities bear crucially upon how they were circulated and used, in ways that we can now only partly recover.¹²



How the truth of a “tale” may be established or negotiated will vary widely, then, depending on local expectations about who may convey it, in what form, to what audiences, and through what media. The chapters in this volume present case studies that measure the scope of this range, focusing mainly though not exclusively on England circa 900–1500. The volume’s narrative arc begins, as it ends, with a comparative chapter that brings past and present into contact, urging readers to consider how a revised understanding of the medieval world as already skeptical of what might be imagined to be its stable certainties, already negotiating between media rather than progressing from oral to written to printed media in a smoothly civilizing process, can deepen our engagement with the uncertainties and multiplicities of the present. The chapters in between are ordered not chronologically, but in a sequence that furthers the conversations taking place between them. Chapters in part 2,

Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066–1307*, 1st ed. (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), plate VIII and pp. 95–96. On pilgrim badges, see *Beyond Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges: Essays in Honour of Brian Spencer*, ed. Sarah Blick (Oxford: Oxbow, 2007). For a brief but lucid summary of the benefits and limitations of the “two cultures” models of the *Annales* school (acknowledging also that these models need not impose rigid separation), see John H. Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010 [Hodder, 2005]), pp. 9–14.

12. As an entry to this way of thinking, see D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For an introduction to the material forms of medieval manuscripts, see the remarkably comprehensive survey provided by Barbara A. Shailor, *The Medieval Book: Illustrated from the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

"Repetition and Continuity: The Claims of History," consider how retelling stories provides writers with a basis for truth-claims about historical continuity, even in the face of major cultural shifts such as the development of the Western church, the rise of the universities, and the Norman Conquest. Chapters in part 3, "Cultural Divides and Their Common Ground," seek to explain the remarkable consensus visible in tales produced by disparate and perhaps conflicting social groups, even across oral, material, and written media, when it comes to matters of life or death such as salvation in the next life or subsistence in the present. Part 4, "New Media and the Literate Laity," focuses on how the expanding literate public of the fifteenth century repurposes old and new media and genres in ways that suit its newly developing concerns.

The conversations within and among these three clusters of chapters began at a conference in honor of Richard Firth Green that invited responses to his consistently pathbreaking contributions to the study of medieval popular culture over the past thirty years. It is fitting, then, that Green opens the discussion in the volume's first chapter, which we have given its own part title: "The Truth of Tales 1." His "'The Vanishing Leper' and 'The Murmuring Monk': Two Medieval Urban Legends" opens with a medieval "friend of a friend" story updated into a modern regional oral vernacular that many readers will recognize immediately (especially if they hail from southern Ontario or northern Ohio), even if they are not accustomed to encountering it in written form. Green's rendition of this medieval tale illustrates the folkloric texture of medieval sermon exempla, which often, like contemporary urban legends, ground their veracity in a claim to personal experience. Against those who would view them as embedded within learned written culture, he suggests that like modern urban legends, these exempla passed around quickly in widely varying forms because Dominican friars recounted them to each other orally, as well as incorporating them within spoken sermons. Short stories with an overt moral theme, exempla were often compiled together in written collections, as well as deployed within written sermons: Green demonstrates the pervasive interplay between written and oral cultures evident in their circulation, recording, and performance. He suggests that like contemporary urban legends, exempla that claim a personal connection with the story were deployed skeptically, rather than always credulously or merely moralistically, as a means of engaging with and perhaps modifying public opinion. They promote not merely top-down instruction but critical evaluation of just the kinds we are familiar with in oral storytelling in the present.

Green's chapter persuasively demonstrates that not only oral, popular narratives but tales embedded within learned writings, in vernacular languages and Latin both, bolster their veracity through claims of a personal connec-

tion to the story being told: the “truth” ratified by social bonds rather than external states of affairs that we encountered in his “truth” in sense 2 (see n. 6). The chapters that follow share his conviction that superficially very different kinds of storytelling, some of which do not present themselves as strictly factual and which may even be wildly fanciful, transact truth through claims anchored in the person, and use those claims to make connections with other persons. Indeed, the persons themselves are often fictive, as we saw with Chaucer’s Miller: they allow a writer or performer to “speak in the person of” another (as medieval literary theory would have it) or to present opposing positions in dialogue.¹³ In suggesting the complementary force of claims anchored in the person, these chapters provide a new perspective on the past thirty years of emphasis on “authority” and “authorship” based in conformity to learned tradition. Vernacular writings may draw on the authorizing force of academic prologues in the Latin tradition. But stories of any kind insistently solicit personal connections from tellers and audience alike, even before they begin, and certainly as they go on—connections that take considerable energy to resist.

Certainly Chaucer cannot resist the tale of Dido, or so he would have us believe. Thomas Hahn launches the volume’s second part, “Repetition and Continuity: The Claims of History,” by providing a newly broadened context for Chaucer’s obsession with Dido. In “Don’t Cry for Me, Augustinus: Dido and the Dangers of Empathy,” Hahn suggests that the repeated preoccupation with the story of Dido indulged in by Chaucer’s own narrative personae, who often suspend their own stories in order to dwell on hers, obliquely demonstrates that reveling in feeling and empathizing with female suffering are activities suitable not only to boys naively reading the classics and writing compositions on them, nor only to religious meditation for that matter, but also to learned literary appreciation. Chaucer presents us with an adult narrator whose indulgence in feeling may seem puerile, yet who seems in affirming these feelings and courting our empathy with them to justify them as a response to narrative and a form of engagement with the past.

13. See *MED*, s.v. “persoune” (n.1), defs. 5b and 5c. Servius deploys this theory in a fourth-century commentary on Virgil’s *Bucolics*: it also appears in commentaries on the *Consolation of Philosophy*, in Dante, in Gower, and in the public dispute between Christine de Pizan, Jean Gerson, and others over the *Roman de la Rose*. On this broader literary history see Ralph Hanna et al., “Latin Commentary Tradition and Vernacular Literature,” in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 2, *The Middle Ages*, ed. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 363–421, pp. 400–402. On the term’s usage in biblical exegesis and religious vernacular writings, especially among the lollard movement, see Fiona Somerset, *Feeling Like Saints: Lollard Writings after Wyclif* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), chaps. 4 and 5.

The titular character in *Piers Plowman*, too, harks back to the past, although for rather different reasons. In “The New Plow and the Old: Law, Orality, and the Figure of Piers the Plowman in B 19,” Stephen Yeager demonstrates that far from proposing a new organization of society (as critics have sometimes suggested), the political order Piers establishes in the poem’s penultimate passus returns to past models by imitating the rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon legal documents. Piers Plowman is not only a homilist deploying the plowshare of the tongue, as critics have argued, but a man of law, closely familiar with the moral force of claims to land that purportedly uphold the country’s good old laws. Pre-Conquest legal documents fuse together legal and homiletic discourse to lend moral gravity to their claims. The versions of these documents that were recopied and indeed forged after the Conquest in order to legitimize legal claims on the basis of continuity with Anglo-Saxon law heighten this homiletic aspect, in contrast with the discursive style of contemporary Anglo-Norman law, in order to authenticate their claims to antiquity. And claims to retain or reinstate traditional law retained their allure up through Chaucer and Langland’s time and beyond.

While written artifacts can certainly demonstrate to us that their writers and readers found claims to continuity attractive, M. J. Toswell suggests in “The Exegesis of Tears in Lambeth Homily 17” that they often cannot provide unambiguous evidence of whether there really was continuity between the learned cultures of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman England, and if so of what kinds. The overlapping homily collections in a Lambeth Palace and a Trinity College Cambridge manuscript she discusses each contain regional or reworked Anglo-Saxon materials alongside new translations into Middle English: she shows that one tale within a sermon found in different forms in the two compilations is closely aware of recent teaching in Paris. Yet any interpretation of continuity or rupture in analyzing these contents must hinge on claims about the relationship between these written texts and the oral preaching performances they may be said to have prompted, recorded for repetition, or commemorated. These homily collections are artifacts of an interplay between oral and written culture in twelfth-century England that critics are laboring to reconstruct; thus the evidence they provide points both ways, as their recent critical history helps to demonstrate.

In repeating Green’s gesture by beginning with a “tale” grounded in personal connection, this time King Arthur’s description to Howel of a nearby four-cornered lake and its four kinds of fish that do not mix, Fiona Somerset shows in “Mingling with the English in Lazamon’s *Brut*” how Arthur, and indeed Lazamon himself, relies on his readers’ understanding of the natural order and how animals behave within it in order to articulate norms for

political conduct. The reiteration of these norms through repeated appeals to the truth of nature allows *Lazamon* to assert continuity across the course of his vast narrative of the history of the British kings from Brut to Cadwalader, even amidst sometimes catastrophic historical change. As he narrates the migrations and invasions and regime changes that bring the British to the height of their power then to fall and exile in anticipation of a future return, *Lazamon* shows that the people and languages of his island have been mixed up with one another since the beginning, just as they are now, amidst however much loss and destruction. What distinguishes kings and military leaders is their willingness to accept their island's multiple ethnicities and origins.

Chapters in the volume's second cluster turn from reiterations of historical continuity in the face of change and loss, to the surprising convergence between the disparate or even conflicting interests and concern of persons of differing class, status, and education forged by fears over survival or salvation. The dialogue and illustrative tale within *Pearl*, the focus of Alastair Minnis's chapter "Unquiet Graves: *Pearl* and the Hope of Reunion," is skeptical (unlike *Lazamon*) that natural human feeling is a reliable guide to proper conduct, finding excess not in the behavior of animals but in the loving bonds between family members that many yearned, then as now, might be continued or renewed in the afterlife. In *Pearl*, significantly, it is a child who rejects the comforting notion found in some popular, vernacular writings that families will dwell together in heaven as they did on earth. She is a child transformed almost beyond recognition by her salvation: no longer uneducated or prone to indulge natural but childish feelings, she can now explain to her father what contemporary learned Latin writings would tell him: that in heaven he will be beyond all that. *Pearl* overturns expected hierarchies of status and of learning by presenting a little girl who is more wise than a grown man, and who explains to him the error of his ways in English rather than in Latin. Yet the poem manages not to disrupt these hierarchies, for its little girl, no longer really quite a little girl, no longer speaks for the lived experience of those on earth. That is the Dreamer's role. His emotional responses establish their own validity by evoking fellow feeling in readers, even those who know he has his theology wrong or take his recounted vision with a grain of salt. Thus *Pearl* does not labor to deny our sense of what feelings are natural and indeed appropriate among loved ones—only of whether we can really retain them after death.

Michael Johnston's "Mercantile Gentility in Cambridge, University Library MS Ff.2.38" similarly treats tales in which fears about death and salvation put extraordinary pressure on relationships both within and beyond the family, impelling the participants to reconsider the conventional expect-

tations attached to specific social statuses. In Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale* the question is what kind of person can be most nobly generous in the face of a promise made to them that must occasion death or dishonor for another, and it remains pointedly unresolved. In the less well-known "Good Matter of the Merchant and His Son" in contrast, the Franklin figure is a poor businessman, much disliked for his rapaciousness, who appears to his son after death in a series of visions pleading for help in discharging his debts so that he may leave Purgatory. The nobly generous figure is this time a Merchant, who rewards the son's loyalty in repaying his father's debts even to the point of destitution with a generous restoration to his father's full estate—and a new family, for the Merchant also bestows on him his daughter's hand in marriage. While the tale itself seems certain that only merchants and not franklins are capable of noble generosity, however, the sharp demarcation between tradesmen and landowners that it creates is undone by its resolution and framing: it turns out that the Merchant is a landowner as well as a tradesman, for he gives his new son-in-law his lands as well as his daughter, and the tale addresses the readers of its urban-mercantile-owned manuscript flatteringly as "gentylmen." Conventions are more durable than we might expect, even amidst rapid social change.

Beast fables that stage dialogues between competing kinds of creatures, rather than explicitly between persons with different social roles, are a more covert way to reconsider social status and hierarchy than we saw in Minnis's or Johnston's tales. Yet the animals in these fables are more than just humans in disguise, as Lisa J. Kiser persuasively argues in "Resident Aliens: The Literary Ecology of Medieval Mice." The truth that underlies the beast fables she examines is a folk knowledge that relies on a common understanding of the workings of the natural world—and a common dislike of that competitor for the human food supply, the humble mouse. Fables may be understood to reinforce a conservative social agenda in that they suggest that people of certain statuses, like animals of particular kinds, should remain in the places where they naturally belong. Yet, on the other hand, these narratives' preference for order over disorder also voice a shared fear over depletion of the food supply that promotes the common good more strongly than the status quo: a dead mouse is even better than a mouse that stays in its place. The fables' disapproval of theft is censorious of social statuses especially associated with deceit and sharp practices; among them the mendicant orders, and the mercantile classes that Johnston's "Good Matter" was so eager to defend. Kiser's subtle reading of social satire locates its viewpoint in a common good all can agree upon, rather than in the pursuit of elite or class-specific interests. Yet she also illustrates how a human-shaped natural order is hostile, even violent,

toward whatever beast (or man) might be characterized as stepping outside its bounds—perhaps unsurprisingly, since human survival may depend on it.

The community concerned about possible disruptions that Barbara A. Hanawalt examines, in “Toward the Common Good: Punishing Fraud among the Victualers of Medieval London,” brings together a broader range of classes, through all the media at their disposal, in the face of the shared threat posed by deficiencies in the supply of nourishing food. She shows the interplay between ritual, material, documentary, oral, and literary aspects of public culture as they are deployed together to oppose what are presented as moral, as well as legal, violations. Both the expert assessment of compliance with regulations or culpability for breaking them, and public engagement with the material and ritual symbols meant to demonstrate what goods can be trusted, show crown and city, royal law and folk law, the people and their rulers, working together to ensure the common good of an urban community by enforcing conformity to “truth” in both senses.

Novelty and experiment with new genres and media characterize the work of an expanding literate public in the fifteenth century. Chapters in the volume’s third cluster examine case studies of this sort of experimentation, attentive to how their writers and compilers graft new forms onto old, and old onto new, as they remain invested in demonstrating their continuities with the past. Nicholas Watson suggests in “The Ignorance of the Laity: *Twelve Tracts on Bible Translation*” that while in earlier centuries it had been possible to categorize the laity as ignorant almost by definition, despite the inconvenient presence of a learned elite among them, this was a working model of the relationship between laity and clergy that was no longer functional by the fifteenth century in England. By this point, indeed, many laypersons were literate in Latin as well as the vernacular. Learning took many more forms, some accessible to audiences beyond the elite. And providing spiritual instruction to laymen had come to seem potentially threatening, rather than an unqualified good. The *Lay Folks’ Catechism* for example provides a brief catechetical survey, largely in the form of lists of the seven deadly sins, works of mercy, virtues, the Ten Commandments, and so forth—yet its prologue worries that rote learning, as opposed to informed knowledge, is not an adequate means to the fundamental truths necessary for salvation. The vast Wycliffite Bible translation of the whole of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament presents a far greater challenge to understanding, yet seems confident in its prologue of its accessibility to lay readers—even though the instruction in biblical interpretation the prologue provides begins at a far higher level of understanding than the focus of the *Lay Folks’ Catechism*’s worries. Watson centers his analysis on Cambridge, University Library MS li.6.26, whose twelve tracts on

biblical translation and redacted translation of Honorius Augustodunensis's *Elucidarium* attempt varying characterizations of lay learning rather than taking a single position on its desirability—surely in part because they think differently about what materials in what media the laity can comprehend.

The Bolton Book of Hours provides direct evidence of broadened capabilities in religious literacy among the laity, as Robyn Malo demonstrates in “York Merchants at Prayer: The Confessional Formula of the Bolton Hours.” For it presents evidence of a layperson who is a maker, rather than however sophisticated a user, of the kinds of instruction that Watson is concerned with. Crammed into the first and last folios of this primer we find a short devotional work that was written by a member of the lay mercantile class rather than a cleric—perhaps, indeed, the writer was a female owner of this manuscript. The text is a form of confession: it aids readers in self-knowledge and preparation for confession by providing a kind of script listing the sins and commandments that rehearses how one might sin in each of them. Malo focuses on the text's highly unusual presentation of the commandments, suggesting that rather than giving a formulaic, universally applicable account of sin, as texts of this kind are sometimes said to do, this form of confession instead tailors its recommendations to the mercantile community of its anticipated readers, focusing especially on kinds of misdeed that disrupt social bonds—this is “truth” very much in Green's sense 2, whereas sense 1 might expect conformity to the standard list of commandments found in the decalogue and to a less idiosyncratic exposition of them.

Kathleen E. Kennedy's “A London Legal Miscellany, Popular Law, and Medieval Print Culture” reveals that law was another field of specialized learning in which the urban laity were becoming increasingly expert. What she calls “Arnold's Book,” a miscellaneous compilation, is typical of this kind of late-medieval household manuscript in that its highly various contents, from recipes to poems to legal statutes, reflect the interests of its owner, the haberdasher Thomas Arnold, without concern for consistency of topic or genre. Yet Arnold's Book has the distinction that it was the one such miscellany to make its way into print. Partly on the basis of which of the contents of Arnold's Book were extracted for printing by later publishers, Kennedy argues that it was the legal texts within the miscellany, rather than the literary ones, that led to its printing. The perceived market for these selections provides evidence that legal writings were broadly popular, and not just among literate audiences. The contents of Arnold's Book show local communities participating in and engaging with the written word on their own terms, deploying legal discourse in interplay with other ritual and oral and popular forms of “tale.”

Whereas the impact on lay literacy of the laity's greater involvement in manuscript production and print culture has been much studied and much debated, Michael Van Dussen draws attention to a late-medieval medium widely available in public places, but whose influence on the lived experience of an expanding literate public has mostly been overlooked. In "Tourists and *Tabulae* in Late-Medieval England" he examines the *tabula*, a written tablet displayed publicly at a particular place on which a description of the setting or an account of what happened or what is commemorated there was displayed. The *tabula* was a medium frequently consulted by those writing personal accounts situated in a specific locale (whether public building, landscape, monument, or what have you) in the later Middle Ages and beyond, but often unmentioned as they copied its contents into their own narrative; while most *tabulae* are no longer extant, their contents can be traced in part by discovering precise textual repetitions in ostensibly personal accounts of public places. In surveying the kinds of "tale" that *tabulae* might present, from architectural description to commemorative poetry to narrative chronology, Van Dussen highlights how these artifacts interacted with other media ranging from speech to memory to the written travel narratives into which they might be seamlessly incorporated.

In "Oral Performance and the Force of the Law: Taillefer at Hastings and Antgubilbix in Smithers," the volume's final part, "The Truth of Tales 2," Andrew Taylor calls on us to reconsider what truth-value we may assign to different media and the tales they convey. He returns our attention once more, as the volume concludes, to what the present might learn from the past, as much as what the study of the past might learn from the present. And he brings together what previous chapters have observed about how tales told over and over are connected to persons to establish their truth, how tales engage readers' or listeners' emotions, and how tales both rely on and shape their readers' or listeners' sense of the natural order of things. His focus is the performance of two narrative songs, one in 1987 and one in 1066, both deployed (one as testimony in court, one in joining battle) in pursuit of claims to land. Yet his primary concern is the various mediated representations of these performances. He does not include the words of either song—in the first case out of respect to the wishes of the Gitxsan and the Wet'suwet'en people, who have resisted the redaction of their oral culture into written form; in the second case because the words Taillefer sang of Roland are not recorded. But even the words, he reminds us, would not convey the impact of the immediate occasion: we have a responsibility to the past, he insists, just as much as to oral forms of legitimation that persist within the written legal culture of the present, to take oral performance seriously rather than

treat it reductively or dismiss its emotive force. Taylor examines how narrative accounts of the contexts of each performance make its emotional impact pivotal to historical change, and draws attention to the hypermediation of the 1987 performance, which has been represented not only in a variety of narratives but in documentary film, musical recording, political cartoons, trial transcripts, and academic books.

Taylor expresses as an ethical imperative a methodological issue that emerges in one form or another in all the chapters in this book: that even as we attend to the truth conveyed by medieval tales, we must attend also to the material and mediated forms in which the past is preserved and transmuted into the present—and to our biases toward media and discourses we have been trained to consider more readily verifiable. We cannot hear Taillefer sing, nor know the words he sung; and while we can delve into the transcripts of the 1987 trial (if they have them right) to discover the words Antgubilbix sang, we can understand what it was like to hear them only through the tales, in media and discursive modes ranging from the ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada in 1997 to a contemporary political cartoon by Don Monet, in which her singing has been asked to attest to other transactional truths. Yet, as this example illustrates, no less than this volume as a whole, our work as literary and cultural historians is immeasurably enriched if we task our imaginations with this effort of reconstruction, laboring to recover something like the full complexity of how persons and communities use tales to negotiate their relationships with one another and with the world, rather than focusing mainly or exclusively on their written relations.

PART ONE 

The Truth of Tales 1

“The Vanishing Leper” and “The Murmuring Monk”

Two Medieval Urban Legends

RICHARD FIRTH GREEN

et me begin by telling you a story that I got from a very reliable source—the man who told it to me said that he had met someone who actually knew the woman that it happened to:

There was this rich lady, see, who had a real kind heart but she was married to this mean sonofabitch and anytime she wanted to do something nice for someone, like give some change to a homeless person, say, he'd yell at her or even beat up on her when they got home. Well, one time when he'd gone off on a hunting trip, she notices a homeless person sitting on the sidewalk in front of their house, so she goes out to see if he'd like some coffee and something to eat maybe. He was real polite and well-spoken but he was in a real bad way so she asks him if he'd like to come in and get cleaned up, and she even offers to run his clothes through the washer for him. She shows him where the shower is and loans him one of her husband's bathrobes and off she goes to the laundry room with all his stuff, but when she gets back upstairs she finds the poor guy's so bushed he's fallen asleep on her bed. Now, just then she hears her husband's truck in the driveway—he's come back early, see, 'cause one of the guys had gotten sick and they'd had to call off the trip. Well, she runs downstairs and she tries to head him off but he's tired from all the driving and the first thing he wants to do is take a shower. He goes up to the bedroom, and she stays downstairs, waiting for him start yelling, but nothing happens. So, soon as she hears the shower running, she sneaks into the bedroom to see what's going on. Well, there's no sign of the homeless person, the bed's not mussed up, the bathrobe's hanging on the

back of the door, everything's just like it was. Excepting that laying there, right in the middle of the bed, is a bunch of roses.

As you have probably guessed by now, this is not an authentic modern contemporary legend—the dénouement would probably have been very much less decorous if it had been—but it is, *mutatis mutandis*, a reconstructed medieval one,¹ and I have not in any way falsified my account of the narrative chain that links me to it. My immediate source was an English Dominican friar who wrote a version of it down, probably in Cambridge, sometime around 1260, and *he* says that he knew a man who knew the woman that it happened to: “A religious and trustworthy man told me this story about a certain married woman, and he saw this same woman with his own eyes after her husband’s death” (*sicut narrauit mihi uir religiosus fidedignus de quadam matrona, qui et ipsam matronam oculis suis post mortem mariti sui uidit*).²

If anything, my modern revamping of this old exemplum as a modern contemporary legend underplays some of its original humor. Of course, stories that involve a husband’s returning unexpectedly to find a strange man alone with his wife always offer a potential source of comedy,³ and there is no reason to suppose that medieval preachers were any more resistant to such offers than anyone else.⁴ If, in this respect, our story of the vanishing leper may seem fairly tame, it is worth pointing out that in the Middle Ages, when leprosy was widely believed to be a venereal disease,⁵ lepers must have posed

1. Since the term “contemporary legend” seems to be the one preferred by most folklorists (though “belief tale” and “modern legend” are also found), it is the one I generally employ in this essay. I have, however, used the term “urban legend” (favored by Jan H. Brunvand) in my title, on the grounds that it is the term most likely to be familiar to the nonspecialist.

2. J. A. Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 3 (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1910), p. 489.

3. See, for instance, the ballad of *Our Goodman*, popular all over Europe; *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. Francis James Child, 5 vols. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1882–98), 5:88–95 (no. 274).

4. An exemplum in an early fourteenth-century Dominican collection, for instance, tells of a clerk who lodges with a knight whose wife had taken a monk as her lover. While she is entertaining him with a lavish feast, they hear her husband knocking at the door (*miles rediens ad portam pulsavit*), and promptly hide him under a bench; the quick-witted clerk, who pretends to have been studying necromancy, then facilitates his escape by “conjuring” him out of his hiding place and banishing him from the house. *La Scala Coeli de Jean Gobi*, ed. Marie-Anne Polo de Beaulieu (Paris: Édition du centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1991), p. 254, n. 207. This story has several analogues in the fabliau tradition, the best-known to English readers being *The Friars of Berwick* (see Melissa M. Furrow, ed., *Ten Fifteenth-Century Comic Poems* [New York: Garland, 1985], pp. 315–17).

5. See Denton Fox, ed., *The Testament of Cresseid* (London: Nelson, 1968), pp. 26–30. Adelard of Bath has an interesting discussion of why, “if a man suffering from leprosy has intercourse with a healthy woman, it is not the woman, but the man who has intercourse with

a particular threat to marital harmony (this is precisely the situation in *Sir Aldingar*, for example, where a villainous steward tries to discredit his queen by smuggling a leper into her bed).⁶ Thus it is far from immaterial that the specific object of the wife's charitable impulses here should be a leper.

Here, then, is the original story as it appears on fol. 92v of London, British Library MS Royal 7 D i.⁷

Now there was once a certain noblewoman who had great sympathy for the poor, though she regarded lepers with particular affection, and she would assist them diligently when she dared, for her husband was extremely hard on the poor, and particularly so on lepers. Despite this, it happened that a certain leper arrived at her door when her lord was out and asked her if she would condescend to bathe him. She indeed feeling great pity for him took him secretly into her husband's chamber and there with her maids ministered to him in the bath. Afterwards the leper asked her insistently whether, now that he had been bathed by her, he might be placed after his bath in her husband's bed. When she had granted this, though with great reluctance, and while he was lying in the bed, her husband suddenly arrived at the door, and when she heard this she ran to him with great fear. Now he, being suspicious of her, immediately enters his chamber and goes to the bed, but, finding there an aroma of a marvelous fragrance, sought out how so great a fragrance might come to be there; going to the bed, he pulled back the covers and found there only the most beautiful roses giving off the wonderful fragrance. After this and when the truth had been revealed to him, he left to his wife the management of all that he owned, asking her that she should spend all their wealth on the poor, in whatever manner seemed best to her.⁸

her next, that suffers from the disease"; *Adelard of Bath, Conversations with His Nephew*, ed. and trans. Charles Burnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 168–69.

6. *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. Child, 2:33–48 (no. 59). Although not recorded before the seventeenth century, the ballad may well be very much older; see Paul Christopher, *The Ballad of Sir Aldingar, Its Origin and Analogues* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952).

7. London, British Library MS Royal 7 D i. has not been edited in its entirety, but 51 of its 315 exempla (including this one) are printed by Stephen L. Forte in "A Cambridge Dominican Collector of *Exempla* in the Thirteenth Century," *Archivum Fratrum Predicatorum* 28 (1958): 115–48; a further 27 are printed in the notes to J. Th. Welter, ed., *Le Speculum Laicorum*, *The-saurus exemplorum* 5 (Paris: Picard, 1914). Its contents have also been calendared in Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances*, 3:477–503.

8. "Fuit autem quedam domina nobilis, multum pauperibus compaciens, sed precipuam affectionem habens ad leprosos, ipsis diligenter subveniebat quando [MS; Forte: quin] audebat pro viro suo, qui fuit durus valde ad pauperes et precipue ad leprosos. Inter hec contigit quendam leprosum, dum dominus eius absens esset, foribus adesse et dominam illam rogare

While it would certainly not be true to claim that folklorists have ignored the medieval forerunners of the modern contemporary legend, an earlier generation of scholars tended to focus far more closely on content than on form: Shirley Marchalonis, for instance, compared an exemplum against vanity in women from the late thirteenth-century *Speculum Laicorum* with a popular sixties story of a black widow spider that makes its nest in a lacquered beehive hairdo,⁹ and Florence Ridley, among others, pointed out that anti-Semitic medieval blood-libel tales like Hugh of Lincoln have their all-too-depressing modern counterparts in stories of laundromat and washroom child-abductions.¹⁰ Thus, in 1985 Gillian Bennett felt herself justified in suggesting that what was really new about the genre was “not the themes nor the motifs but the way they are shaped.”¹¹ She argued that, structurally, contemporary legends bear a strong resemblance to the “personal experience stories” analyzed by the linguists Labov and Waletzky, and that, unlike a saint’s legend, say, the contemporary legend “is specifically adapted to formulate, defend, and negotiate public opinion” (p. 229). Since the contemporary legend regards “the truth of the events [as being] just as important as the nature of the events” (p. 228), “instead of distancing herself from the story, [the teller] attaches it to her life and experience as closely as possible” (p. 225). One obvious way in which tellers may attach such stories to their own lives is to claim they happened to a *friend of a friend* of theirs (folklorists have labeled this subgenre “FOAF” tales). Despite the fact that elsewhere Bennett herself gives a pertinent early example—Richard Baxter’s introducing a ghost story in 1691 with the words

quatinus ipsum balneare dignaretur. Ipsa vero ei compaciens cepit ipsum in cameram viri sui secreto et ibi cum puellis suis eidem in balneo ministrabat. Post hec rogavit eam ille leprosus, iam ab ipsa balneatus, modis omnibus ut in lecto mariti sui poneretur ipse post balneum. Quod cum concederet illa, licet cum difficultate magna, dum ipse iaceret in lecto prefato, ecce maritus eius venit subito ad portam. At illa hec audiens cum tremore magno occurrit domino suo. Ille vero suspicionem habens de ea, cito intrat in cameram suam ad lectum suum inveniensque ibi miri odoris fragrantiam, quesivit unde ibi tanta fragrantia esse potuit, et accedens ad lectum sublevavit pannos et nil ibi invenit nisi rosas pulcherimas miro odore fragrantem. Quo facto et facti veritate comperta ipse omnia que habuerat reliquit ordinacioni uxoris sue, rogans ut sicut ei videtur expedire, in pauperes bona ipsorum expenderet” (Forte, “Cambridge Dominican,” pp. 130–31, no. 120).

9. Shirley Marchalonis, “Three Medieval Tales and Their Modern American Analogues,” *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 13 (1976): 173–75.

10. Florence F. Ridley, “A Tale Told Too Often,” *Western Folklore* 26 (1967): 153–56, and Richard M. Dorson, *Land of the Millrats* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 228–31; cf. Véronique Campion-Vincent, “Demonologies in Contemporary Legends and Panics,” *Fabula* 34 (1993): 238–51, and Patricia A. Turner, “The Atlanta Child Murders: A Case Study of Folklore in the Black Community,” in *Contemporary Legend: A Reader*, ed. Gillian Bennett and Paul Smith (New York: Garland, 1996), pp. 299–310.

11. Gillian Bennett, “What’s ‘Modern’ about the Modern Legend?” *Fabula* 26 (1985): 218–29, p. 222.

“this story I have heard related by several Persons of good Repute, that lived in the same Town with him and heard it from his own mouth. The man I have several times seen”¹²—she leaves us with the strong impression that such a performative stance is distinctly modern.

Recently, however, as scholars have identified more and more formal parallels between modern contemporary legends and stories from the Middle Ages, this view has come under increasing attack: Elissa Henken, writing about Gerald of Wales,¹³ Carl Lindahl on Robert Mannyng of Brunne,¹⁴ and Bill Ellis on Poggio Bracciolini¹⁵ have all provided evidence of medieval authors mimicking personal oral narratives in their writing and shown them going to considerable lengths to supply authenticating information for their tales. Lindahl, for instance, stresses the importance of “the naming of and vouching for witnesses” for Robert Mannyng of Brunne,¹⁶ as in his tale of the mother whose thoughtless cursing of her daughter for a trivial lapse has disastrous results: “Y shal 3ow telle what me was told, / Of a prest þat sagh and fond / Pys chaunce yn þe holy lond” (1252–54).¹⁷ Ellis even gives a clear instance of a FOAF narrative from Poggio: “a well-educated man, Cencio the Roman, frequently told me about something that’s difficult to reject, which a neighbor of his, a person who was by no means a fool, narrated as having happened to himself” (p. 84). Of course the mere presence of a such a FOAF claim cannot in itself be conclusive, and Ellis is surely right to add that, “before giving ‘contemporary legend’ status to this narrative, a cautious folklorist would need another text of the same story to be sure that it did in fact circulate in several variants” (p. 85). While Ellis himself is able to point to a similar story, also in Poggio, he does not take his argument further. In what follows, however, I will try to show that there is, in fact, plenty of evidence that medieval contemporary legends, including “The Tale of the Vanishing Leper” with which I began, circulated widely in variant forms. I shall further argue that, as with their modern counterparts, it is the status of the truth-claims they are making that provides such legends with their narrative impetus, and conse-

12. Gillian Bennett, “Legend, Performance and Truth,” in *Monsters with Iron Teeth: Perspectives on Contemporary Legend, III*, ed. Gillian Bennett and Paul Smith (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), p. 16.

13. Elissa Henken, “Contemporary Legend in the Works of Gerald of Wales,” *Contemporary Legend*, n.s., 4 (2001): 93–107.

14. Carl Lindahl, “The Re-oralized Legends of Robert Mannyng’s *Handlyng Synne*,” *Contemporary Legend*, n.s., 2 (1999): 34–62.

15. Bill Ellis, “Haec in sua Parochia Accidisse Dixit: The Rhetoric of 15th Century Contemporary Legends,” *Contemporary Legend*, n.s., 4 (2001): 74–92.

16. Lindahl, “Re-oralized Legends,” p. 48, also pp. 50–55.

17. Robert Mannyng of Brunne, *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Idelle Sullens (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1983), p. 34.

quently that any unthinking assumption of a credulous appetite for tall stories among medieval popular audiences may stand in need of serious qualification. In principle, there is no reason to suppose that such medieval audiences were any more gullible than modern ones, and Gillian Bennett's notion of an unbridgeable gulf between the contemporary legend and the saint's life may well turn out to be overstated.¹⁸

While the narrative content of "The Tale of the Vanishing Leper" might usefully be compared with that of "The Tale of the Vanishing Hitchhiker" (one of the most widespread of all modern contemporary legends, and one that, according to Gillian Bennett and Paul Smith, has often been regarded "as the standard by which to judge newly collected stories"¹⁹), its formal characteristics are what really make it a classic contemporary legend. Arguably, it fulfills every requirement of the genre. Self-evidently it is authenticated as having been told of a friend of a friend, and the first of these friends, moreover, is one in whom we are invited to place particular confidence—"vir religiosus fidedignus." It is, at least until the dénouement, a commonplace tale involving everyday characters (as Gillian Bennett puts it, it tells "of a single event in the near past, and [features] a cast of ordinary people"²⁰). Moreover, as in many contemporary legends, the story offers a practical moral lesson: "Be kind to beggars" (cf. "Don't hitchhike alone after dark"). Perhaps most important of all is the fact that "The Tale of the Vanishing Leper" seems to have circulated widely in the early and mid-thirteenth century and that others, apart from our English Dominican, apparently thought that they knew the woman it happened to. In other words, the story is not told as of someone in a distant time or place, but of a contemporary, and the audience is offered personal grounds for accepting its factual basis. Furthermore, though some versions of the tale seem to have circulated in written form (as indeed do many modern contemporary legends), it is clear from the range of narrative variants that its primary medium of dissemination was oral and that it spread, much as some modern contemporary legends can be shown to have done, within a well-defined group—not university students or traveling salesmen in this case, but Dominican friars. Finally (while conceding that the adjective *urban* in the phrase *urban legend* has proved particularly controversial), I might point out that such a story could not have circulated as rapidly as it did without the kind of concentration of population that only urbanization makes possible (along with a corresponding freedom of movement between urban centers); as Larry

18. Even in our own day the gulf may be smaller than she believes; see Lydia Fish, "Father Baker: Legends of a Saint in Buffalo," *New York Folklore* 10.3–4 (1984): 23–33.

19. Bennett and Smith, *Contemporary Legend: A Reader*, p. xxix.

20. Bennett, "What's 'Modern'?" p. 223.

Scanlon has written, “the new preaching movements were tied to the newly emergent urban world.”²¹

The earliest appearance of “The Tale of the Vanishing Leper” probably predates the founding of the Dominican Order in 1220. A version of it is told by the French Augustinian Jacques de Vitry (b. ca. 1160), one of the most famous preachers of his day and the author of four collections of sermons.²² In the most popular of these, the *Sermones vulgares*, he introduces the story as one that he had learned at first hand from the woman herself: “I knew a certain noblewoman who had great sympathy for the sick, and lepers most of all” (*Novi quandam nobilem dominam que valde compatiebatur infirmis et maxime leprosis*).²³ It is easy to see why he was so successful as a preacher, for he goes on to tell one of the liveliest versions of the story. He adds small realistic details (the weather is hot, for instance, which helps explain why the leper should wish to come in out of the sun and why the returning husband should want to lie down in the middle of the day); he fleshes out the characters (the leper weeps and whines, emotionally blackmailing the woman into letting him lie down in her husband’s bedroom; the husband, returning from hunting, rants violently outside the door, making the woman fear for her life). He also makes effective use of direct speech, giving a vivid immediacy to the action. The weakest point of his version is its ending. The leper vanishes and a beautiful odor is left behind him—so beautiful, reports the husband, “that it seemed to me that I was in Paradise”—but there is nothing further; we are left feeling the need for some more tangible mark of the leper’s vanished presence, the kind of thing, in fact, that our English Dominican effectively supplies with his beautiful roses.

There is one other version of the tale preceding the English one. Etienne de Bourbon (b. ca. 1195), an early member of the Dominican order in France, knew of Jacques de Vitry’s written version (“*hoc etiam scripsit magister Jacobus de Vitri*”) but chose instead to tell the story as he had heard it from a fellow friar, Geoffroi de Blevex, a master of Theology in the schools of Paris.²⁴ This version is sparer and less ambiguous than Jacques de Vitry’s: the main

21. Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 65.

22. Most of de Vitry’s sermons are very difficult to date; though he seems to have collected them towards the end of his life (d. 1240), they were evidently written throughout his long career.

23. *The Exempla of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. Thomas Frederick Crane (London: Folklore Society, 1890), pp. 44–45 (no. 95).

24. Etienne de Bourbon, *Anecdotes historiques, légendes et apologues, tirés du recueil inédit d’Étienne de Bourbon*, ed. A. Lecoy de La Marche (Paris: Société de l’histoire de France, 1877), p. 132.

character, though sickly and ulcerous, is not explicitly said to be a leper, and the *dénouement* subordinates the mysterious to the miraculous. Here, if anything, there is too heavy-handed a substitution for the leper's residual presence: "her husband, coming to the said chamber, instantly approached her bed and found the said invalid. Believing him to be an adulterer, he was about to kill him as he lay on the bed, when the naked body of our Lord appeared to him in the form in which he had hung on the cross and said, 'Why do you persecute me, I who have suffered this for you?' He threw himself to the ground, but when he raised his eyes he found nothing there, and was converted to the Lord."

One further version of "The Tale of the Vanishing Leper" is roughly contemporary with the English one and fairly close to it in content. It appears in the *Bonum universale de apibus* (1256–61) of the Belgian Dominican Thomas of Cantimpré.²⁵ This is a fairly brief account: the husband is a *nobilissimus miles*, but nothing is said of his horror of lepers nor why he is away from the house; the vanished leper leaves behind him a bed covered with the most fragrant roses (*rosis fragrantissimis*), they are not hidden beneath the sheets, and the couple bursts into tears, praising the Lord, when they discover them. One significant addition is that it is said to be wintertime, making the sudden appearance of the roses all the more miraculous. Like all the versions of the story we have looked at so far, this one, too, is authenticated by a contemporary reference: Thomas of Cantimpré tells us that it happened to a venerable lady known to him personally called Ada de Belomeir. It is of course just conceivable that this lady was the same one known to Jacques de Vitry earlier in the century, but it seems far more likely that we are dealing here with a phenomenon commonly to be met with in the modern contemporary legend—the variant attribution of variant versions.

"The Tale of the Vanishing Leper" lived on throughout the later Middle Ages, but by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it has less of the feel of a contemporary legend; it has become a historical event, something that happened back in the time of Jacques de Vitry or Etienne de Bourbon, and its mode of transmission has become primarily literary. Jacques de Vitry's version seems to have been particularly popular;²⁶ it was included in a major early-fourteenth-century collection of exempla, probably compiled by the Dominican Arnold of Liège, known as the *Alphabetum Narrationum*, and from there it was translated into a number of European vernaculars, includ-

25. Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universale de apibus*. In *quo ex mirifica apum repub. universa vitae bene & christiane instituende ratio traditur* (Duaci: Baltazaris Belleri, 1627), p. 253.

26. See, for example, the *Speculum Laicorum*, ed. Welter, p. 64 (no. 313), and the *Tabula Exemplorum*, ed. J. Th. Welter (Paris and Toulouse: Occitania, 1926), p. 33 (no. 101).

ing French, Spanish, and English.²⁷ One later version is perhaps worth singling out, to show that the survival of the tale was not entirely due to literary transmission. Jean Gobi, a Dominican from southern France and the author of a lively collection called the *Scala Coeli* (1322–30), says that he got it from Jacques de Vitry, but he tells it entirely in his own words, and his ending is significantly different: “when the couple had investigated the cause [of the fragrant odor] it was found that it was Christ who had been taken in by the lady” (*cumque requisivisset causam, inventum est quod Christum . . . per dominam fuerat receptus*).²⁸ Thus, consciously or not, Gobi combines the endings of both Jacques de Vitry and Etienne de Bourbon, suggesting strongly that his version owes more to oral reconstruction than literary preservation.

MS Royal 7 D i. contains a number of other exempla for which the author provides authenticating details. He includes eight other regular FOAF tales,²⁹ and one friend-of-a-friend-of-a-friend (FOAFOAF) tale.³⁰ For some of these

27. The English example may stand for all: “Jacobus de Vetriaco tellis how som tyme þer was a worthi ladie, & sho had grete petie of seke folk, & specialle of lepre men. And hur husband was a myghti man, & he had lepre folk in so grete vgsomnes þat he myght not suffer to se þaim, nor lat þaim com with-in his howse. So on a day as a lepre man was cryand at his yate, þe ladie come to hym & askid hym if he wold owder eate or drynk, and he ansswerd agayn & sayd; ‘I am here hugelie turment with hete of þe son, & I will nowder eate nor drynk bod if þou take me into þi place.’ And sho ansswerd agayn & sayd; ‘knowis þou not how my husband vgis to see lepros men? & he will onone com home fro huntynge, & if he fynde þe with-in his place, happelie he will sla bothe þe and me.’ And he wepid & made sorow. So at þe laste þis ladie might no langer se hym wepe, & sho tuke hym vp in hur armys & bare hym into hur place, and þan sho prayed hym to eate. He said agayn he wold nowder eat nor drynk bod if sho bare hym vnto hur chamber & layde hym in hur awn bed, & þer he wolde riste hym awhile & þan he wold eate. And he made so mekull sorow þat sho mot not suffre itt, þat sho had hym vnto hur chawmer & laid hym in hur bed, & sho laid a softe cod vnderneþe his head & happed hym with a gay couerlad. And þis done, onone hur husband come home fro huntynge & bad hur oppyn hym þe chamber dure, & he wold lay hym down & slepe a while; & sho was ferd þat he suld sla bothe þe lepre man & hur, & made hur to tarie a while, & wolde not com & oppyn þe dure redelie. & he seyng þat sho tarid & wold nott com, brest oppyn þe dure in a grete anger and went in-to þe chambr. And onone he come bakk agayn & mett his wyfe & sayde vnto hur; ‘Now þou hase done wele; for þou hase arayed our bed on þe beste wise, bod I mervayll whare þou gat so gude spicis þurgh whilk all our chawmer is fyllid so full of gude savir with, for onone as I come into þe chaw[m]ber, þer was þerin so swete a savur þat me thocht I was in paradise.’ And when sho þat befor was ferd for hur dead hard þis, sho went in-to þe chamber with hym & fand it as he sayde; & þan sho told hym all how scho had done; & þai lukid in þe bed and þis lepre man was away. And þan hur husbond þat befor was als wude as a lyon, wex als meke as a lambe, & evur afterward luffid God & lepere men better.” *An Alphabet of Tales*, ed. Mary Macleod Banks, 2 vols., Early English Text Society, o.s., 126 and 127 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1904–5), 1:117–18.

28. Jean Gobi, *Scala Coeli*, ed. Polo de Beaulieu, pp. 259–60 (no. 223).

29. Herbert, *Catalogue*, vol. 3, pp. 484 (no. 65), 489 (no. 124), 490 (n. 139), 493 (no. 183), 495 (no. 200), 496 (no. 216), 497 (no. 227), and 503 (no. 315).

30. *Ibid.*, p. 502 (no. 311).

he gives additional authenticating details, specifying the time and place of the event—Bath, 1244, in one case (no. 227), and in another mentioning that he has suppressed the actual names of the people concerned since they are too well known (no. 311). There is a further subgroup of four FOAF tales,³¹ and one FOAFOAF tale,³² that are said to have been related to confessors. He gives the name of the confessor in one case (no. 54), and explains why he has deliberately suppressed the name of the penitent in another: “a certain religious, trustworthy, and morally admirable man told me that he knew the woman, who is still alive, and that she often confessed these things to him. . . . My informant said that for the time being he wished to conceal the place where these things happened and the name of the woman concerned” (no. 216). He tells three more stories (one of which is dated) that, he says, he heard directly from the person concerned;³³ in one case (no. 185) he gives the name of his informant, Bartholomew de Grimestune.³⁴ Finally, nine stories are introduced by some such phrase as *retulit mihi quidam vir religiosus fidedignus*,³⁵ and for several of these he is keen to stress the local knowledge of his informants—a story about a woodcutter at Fountains Abbey, for instance, was told him “by a young man from the archdiocese of York” (no. 86), and a ghost story about a perjurer called Hugh of Norwich was told him “by a certain religious and trustworthy man from the diocese of Norwich who had been born and raised there” (no. 93).³⁶ If we include two further stories concerning the recently deceased St. Edmund of Abingdon (d. 1240) that were told to him, he says, by people who had known the saint,³⁷ we have at least thirty exempla (or approximately 10 percent of the total collection), that, as Gillian Bennett puts it, are “specifically adapted to formulate, defend, and negotiate public opinion.”

I would not wish to imply that MS Royal 7 D i. is unique in its collection of medieval contemporary legends—indeed, I suspect that such tales were relatively common in the thirteenth century, and I can give at least one other example of a similar collection compiled by an English friar in the second half of the century, though this time by a Franciscan: the anonymous author

31. Ibid., pp. 483 (nos. 54 and 55), 484 (no. 63), and 496 (no. 216).

32. Ibid., p. 484 (no. 62).

33. Ibid., pp. 481 (no. 32), 490 (no. 140), and 493 (no. 185); no. 32 is dated to 1250. No. 244 (p. 498) should probably also be included here (*Hanc narrationem retulit Magister Robertus de Burwelle de seipso contigisse*).

34. Cf. Ibid., p. 498 (no. 244).

35. Ibid., pp. 480 (no. 19), 481 (nos. 33 and 34), 485 (no. 77), 486 (nos. 86, 87 and 93), 502 (no. 313), and 503 (no. 314).

36. Cf. Ibid., pp. 418 (no. 34), 486 (no. 87), and 503 (no. 315).

37. Ibid., pp. 488–89 (no. 117) and 491 (no. 149); cf. 483 (no. 56) and 496 (no. 218).

of the work known as the *Liber Exemplorum* (1270–79) draws on personal experience or on conversations with his friends for twenty-six of the surviving 213 exempla in his collection (it originally contained more, but the manuscript is defective at the end).³⁸ The following preamble is fairly typical of this subgroup: “a certain very noteworthy story about lawyers, though horrible to hear, was told me by a certain man from Normandy, and I was, and am, sure that he would not have told it to me had it not been true. There was in the city of Rouen a certain cleric called William Bodin whom the said Norman knew, in that he saw him almost every day in that said city. He was a lawyer, and . . .”³⁹ In the fourteenth century Jean Gobi, author of the *Scala Coeli*, cites personal information (e.g., *audivi a quodam predicatore fide digno*) for five of the stories in his collection,⁴⁰ and, while generally late-medieval exempla collections have much more of the feel of literary anthologies, Bronislaw Geremek has discussed a group of exempla, “noviter conscripta,” that appears at the end of a late fifteenth-century Dutch collection, the *Speculum Exemplorum*, in terms very similar to those I have employed here.⁴¹ Evidently the oral exemplum remained productive, as the linguists would say, to the very end of the Middle Ages.

We have seen, then, that Royal MS 7 D i is not the only medieval preacher’s collection to contain FOAF tales, nor is “The Tale of the Vanishing Leper” the only medieval story that can be shown to exhibit the formal characteristics of the modern contemporary legend. Let me conclude by analyzing a final example, this one exhibiting an even wider range of variants and (perhaps because of its inherent improbability) an even greater tendency for its authenticating details to be reinvented. “The Tale of the Murmuring Monk” tells of a man who is afflicted with a burning (or grotesquely swollen) tongue as a punishment for backbiting (or sometimes gossiping, or litigiousness); in its most common form it is a ghost story, and it seems to have been particularly popular in England.⁴²

38. *Liber Exemplorum ad Usus Predicantium*, ed. A. G. Little (Aberdeen: Typis Academicis, 1908).

39. *de advocatis quoddam admodum notabile et auditu horribile retulit michi Normannus quidam, de quo satis certus sum et fui quod non referret michi nisi verum. Erat in civitate Rothomagi quidam clericus nomine magister Willelmus Bodin quem dictus Normannus ita novit sicut illum quem quasi cotidie in dicta civitate vidit. Advocatus autem erat, et . . . Liber Exemplorum*, ed. Little, pp. 41–42 (no. 67).

40. *Scala Coeli*, ed. Polo de Beaulieu, pp. 38–39.

41. Bronislaw Geremek, “L’exemple et la circulation de la culture au Moyen Âge,” *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome: Moyen Âge, Temps modernes* 92 (1980): 168–70.

42. See Frederic C. Tubach, *Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales*, FF Communications 204 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1981), no. 4907; also *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Sullens, Appendix II, no. 21.

The classic form of this tale appears in an Anglo-Norman confessional handbook, the *Manuel des pechiez*, which was composed about 1260, but a roughly contemporary version also appears in our old friend MS Royal 7 D i.⁴³ The *Manuel des pechiez* was subsequently translated into English by Robert Mannyng of Brunne as *Handlyng Synne* at the very beginning of the fourteenth century, and soon after that versions appear in both the *Northern Homily Cycle* and, much condensed, in the *Fasciculus Morum*.⁴⁴ Mannyng's version in particular vividly conveys both the eeriness and the horror of the spectacle:

Befel þe tyme as hyt ys ryght,	
Munkes to ryse at mydnyght,	
And whan matynes were al done	
Be conuent ȝede* to bedde sone.	went
A munk lefte behynde a trow*	a while
Þat þe ded* was wnt to* knowe.	dead man / used to
Whan þys munk com before þe chaptyl,*	chapter house
As ordyr askyþ he loutede* a lytyl.	bowed
And as he loutede hys eȝe gan blenche*	glanced
And sagh one sytte before þe benche:	
A foul þyng and a grysly,	
He sagh neuer noun so lōply.	
He shette* hys tung out before þe grecys*	shot / steps
And gnogh* hyt ynward al to pecys.	gnawed
Hys tung was brennyng þat he so gnogh;	
Yn to hys mouþ aȝen he drogh*.	drew
And eft out, he dede hyt shete,	
And gnogh aȝen wyþ peynys grete.	
Many tymes þan dede he so. ⁴⁵	

None of these versions gives a precise source for the story, but MS Royal 7 D i. says that it occurred in a *cenobio magno Anglie*,⁴⁶ and the authors of the *Manuel/Handlyng* version imply that they know the monastery concerned but would rather not name it: the *Manuel*, for instance, reads,

43. Herbert, *Catalogue*, pp. 280 (no. 23) and 496 (no. 226).

44. *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Sullens, pp. 90–92 (lines 3555–622); the only edition of the NHC version is in Carl Horstmann, “Die Evangelien-Geschichten der Homiliensammlung des Ms. Vernon,” *Archiv* 57 (1877): 310; *Fasciculus Morum*, ed. and trans. Siegfried Wenzel (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1989), pp. 162–65.

45. Ed. Sullens, p. 91 (lines 3567–85).

46. Herbert, *Catalogue*, p. 496 (no. 226).

Bien deuez ceste cunte crere,
 Car il auint en Engleterre,
 En vn leu moult renomé,
 Qe ieo lesse [var: Ke ore ne voil] nomer de gré.

[You should certainly believe this story, for it happened in England in a very well-known place that I omit [do not now wish] to name from choice.]⁴⁷

As with many modern contemporary legends, however, there exists a large number of variant forms of this story. In the very earliest, by Odo of Cheriton, the central figure is not a monk but a nun, her vice is litigiousness not backbiting, and it is not her tongue but her middle (perhaps because of the Latin term *stomachosus*) that burns. Odo gives no location, not even an approximate one, but he does add the authenticating detail that burn marks were found next day in the place where her ghost had appeared.⁴⁸ In one fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Speculum Laicorum*, the ghost, whose vocation in life is not specified, suffers its torment in the graveyard (not in church) and the other dead souls rise up to complain about its presence among them—the scene being witnessed not by a monk but by a holy anchorite.⁴⁹ In another fifteenth-century version by the Dominican Johann Herolt, the grave of a detractor is opened many years after burial and his tongue is found to be intact, rejected even by the toads that feed on the rest of his putrid corpse.⁵⁰ In still other versions, the punishment is inflicted before death: the *Vitae Fratrum* describes a backbiting Dominican friar, who is struck to the ground with a tongue so swollen that it fills his whole mouth (*lingua quam maxime ingrossata ipsum os ita videbatur implere*) and is only saved after his companion prays for help to Jordan of Saxony.⁵¹ Another Dominican, Thomas of Cantimpré, who says that he knew the man concerned (*novi . . . sacerdotem*), describes a backbiting priest gnawing at his own tongue on his deathbed,⁵² whereas the early

47. Robert of Brunne's "Handlyng Synne," ed. F. J. Furnivall, 2 vols., Early English Text Society, o.s., 119 and 123 (London: Early English Text Society, 1901–3), 1:124. Robert Mannyng himself has: "Þys tale y wote and vndyrstande / Where hyt fyl yn ynglande, / At a ful namecouth [famous] abbeye / Þat y ne wyle telle ne bewrewe [reveal]." Ed. Sullens, p. 92 (lines 3617–20).

48. Léopold Hervieux, ed., *Les Fabulistes latins*, vol. 4, *Eudes de Cheriton et ses dérivés* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1896), p. 267 (no. 5).

49. Ed. Welter, p. 40 (no. 180a).

50. [Johann Herolt], *Liber discipuli de erudicione Christifidelium* (Cologne, 1509), *de quinto precepto*, fin. (also Welter, ed., *Speculum Laicorum*, p. 26); a slightly different version appears in Herolt's *Sermones discipuli de tempore* (Lyon, 1492), *sermo* 91 (Trinity 5).

51. Gérard de Fraichet, *Vitae Fratrum Ordinis Praedicatorum* (Louvain: Charpentier & Schoonjans, 1896), p. 136.

52. *Bonum universale*, ed. 1627, pp. 389–90; Johann Herolt gives an abridged version of this,

fourteenth-century *Speculum morale* (wrongly attributed to Vincent of Beauvais) describes a similar event as having occurred in England, with the priest unable to make his final confession because of a grotesquely swollen tongue.⁵³ In light of such variations, it is hardly surprising that John Bromyard in the *Summa Predicantium* was skeptical about the whole business, introducing the tale as a *quadam historia licet aprocripha*.⁵⁴

Against such a background, then, it is particularly striking to find the English Benedictine Thomas Walsingham in the late fourteenth century providing a detailed pedigree for this tale and furnishing it with verifiable people, places, and dates. In his *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani* (ca. 1381), Walsingham records that the ghost of a monk of that house called Nicholas Goudeby, “a chatterer and a habitual gossip whilst he lived” (*vaniloquus et detractionibus assuetus dum viveret*), appeared to brother John Marines, “with a long and broad tongue, burning like a torch” (*cum lingua longa et lata, ac ignit quasi facula*) after his death.⁵⁵ Not only are we told the names of the monks involved and the abbey at which the incident occurred (Marines was in actuality a cellarer at St. Albans), but Walsingham even dates the story for us. It happened, he says, during the time of Abbot Michael, 29th Abbot; that is to say, sometime between 1335 and 1349, or, the cynic might observe, more than a hundred years after the story was first recorded.⁵⁶ Even Walsingham admits that the burning tongue stretched belief (*ultra quem credi potest*), and in light of John Bromyard’s earlier skepticism, one could hardly ask for a clearer example of the teller of a medieval contemporary legend going to great lengths to buttress his tale against potential skeptics.

Most medieval exempla are preserved for us in preachers’ handbooks and collections of materials, but in the case of “The Murmuring Monk” we are

Sermones discipuli de sanctis cum promptuaria exemplorum et miraculis Beate Virginis (Lyon, 1492), *Exempla de D*, p. 11.

53. *Speculum quadruplex, sive Speculum maius*, 4 vols. (Douai: Baltazar Beller, 1624), 3:1150–51 (lib. 3, pars 4, dist. 1).

54. *Ideo iustum videtur quod tales in lingua plus affligantur quare illam corporis partem plus peccato assuescunt. Hoc pulchre ostendebatur in quadam historia licet aprocripha tamen rationi consona* (Basel: Johann Amerbach, 1484), D, VI, 29.

55. *Gesta abbatum monasterii Sancti Albani a Thoma Walsingham*, ed. Henry Thomas Riley (*Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi scriptores* 28), 3 vols. (London: Longmans, 1867–69), 2:367–68.

56. Not only had this hoary old ghost story been reinvented with a brand-new pedigree, but like its modern counterparts, this reinvention would itself become the source of new progeny: within a generation of Walsingham’s *Gesta*, an interpolator had included “The Tale of the Murmuring Monk” in a copy of a work known as *Convertimini*, written by the distinguished English Dominican Robert Holcot (d. 1349), and he introduced his interpolation with the phrase “we read among the deeds of the abbots of St Albans” (*legitur in gestis abbatum sancti Albani*). Herbert, *Catalogue*, pp. 134–35 (no. 135).

lucky enough be able to witness an exemplum being actually put to work: it is included in a surviving sermon, preached in the vernacular, probably in Worcester, at the end of the fourteenth century. This is the closest we are likely to get to a field-recording of a medieval contemporary legend in the telling. The preacher begins by informing us that he had found the tale in a written text (a claim that in a period of restricted literacy must have had quite different connotations than it would have now). “I rede þat ter was in an hows of religiun swich on as tis is—God saue—or swich a-noper, an holi man with al þat was sexteyn of þe place” (*I have read that in a religious house (just like this one—God save it!—or much the same) there was a very holy man who was sexton of the place*). He then gives a vivid description of this man’s encounter with a hideous ghost, who hacks away at his burning tongue with a pair of shears, livening up his account with lots of direct speech:

Pis holi man hap miche vunder what tis schuld mene: & ate laste a took a good herte & spak to hym: “I charge þe,” a seith, “e þe vertu of þe blessed trinite, vadir & sone & hlogost, þat þe tel me, or ell, 3if þe maist nat spek to me, mak me sum syne, what þe art & whi þe sist her e swich a-ray!” & he answerd & seith: “Ich was,” a seith, “sum tyme a broþer of þine, dwellyng e þe same place, and for be-cause þat ich was a misspekir, a bakbiter & sueþ ofte-tmes þe sed of detractiun a-mong mi breþerin ich am punschid e þe same membir þat i trespassid with, þat is mi tunge, and schal be þre hundrid wynter her-afteward, as sum bokes seie. 3e, & ter is no vir e þis world be þe þrid part so hot as is tis þat te seist o mi tunge, & euery clip þat i clippe is now mor greuis to me þan it wold ha be sume tyme & a man had stekid me to þe herte, þat is þe grettiste peyne þat a man may haue her e þis world.”⁵⁷

[This holy man wondered very much what this might mean and at last he got up his courage and spoke to him: “By the power of the Blessed Trinity—Father Son, and Holy Spirit—, I demand that you tell me (or if you may not speak, make me some sign) who you are and why you sit here in this manner?” And he answered and said, “I was once one of your brothers living in this same place, and because I was a gossip and a backbiter and often sowed the seeds of detraction among my brothers I am punished in the same member that I sinned with (my tongue), and so I shall be for three hundred years more, as some books say. And there is no fire in this world

57. *Three Middle English Sermons from the Worcester Chapter Manuscript F.10*, ed. D. M. Grisdale, Leeds School of English Language Texts and Monographs 5 (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1939), pp. 39–40.

so hot as the one you see on my tongue, and every cut that I make is now more painful to me than it would once have been had someone stabbed me in the heart, which is the greatest pain that a man may suffer on earth.”]

Reading this version, it is not difficult to understand how such medieval exempla might have been sustained by a richly oral popular tradition.

Though I have argued that the kind of medieval exempla I have been discussing exhibit all the features of a modern contemporary legend, some may still find it difficult to accept that the religious sermon was an appropriate medium for this particular folklore genre (even if some similarity clearly exists between the explicit morals they were intended to inculcate and the cautionary element that is often present in modern contemporary legends). But this, too, need not present us with an insuperable difficulty. In the early 1980s there was a story circulating in North America that the company Proctor and Gamble owed its commercial success to a pact with the devil and that if you looked carefully enough you could make out the mark of the beast in its trademark; “although no organized church group of national influence was ever identified as having spread the trademark rumors,” writes Jan Brunvand, “many versions of it did travel from person to person via individual church bulletins, letters to editors of religious publications, and especially through callers to Christian radio talk shows.”⁵⁸ And at the end of the eighties Brunvand recorded another popular American contemporary legend, “The Unsolvable Math Problem.” Dramatized in the movie *Good Will Hunting*, it is the story of the professor who puts an unsolvable math problem on the chalkboard and the student who, arriving late to class, thinks it is part of a test he has missed, and promptly solves it. Although the germ of this story may be based on an actual event, Brunvand shows that it was first popularized by the Reverend Robert H. Schuller, author and host of the “Hour of Power” television worship service at the Crystal Cathedral in Los Angeles, and that it appeared in a biography of Schuller published in 1983. Shortly afterward, he tells us, “The story was repeated in a resource newsletter for pastors called *Parables, &c.*” Brunvand’s description of the way “The Unsolvable Math Problem” circulated offers an uncannily accurate paradigm for the circulation of such medieval exempla as “The Tale of the Vanishing Leper”: “Schuller’s version—modified in numerous ways—was retold and later reprinted, thus becoming a source drawn on by other ministers for their sermons. People who heard the sermons must have repeated the story, in turn modifying it further.”⁵⁹

58. Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Choking Doberman and Other “New” Urban Legends* (New York: Norton, 1986), p. 182.

59. Jan Harold Brunvand, *Curses! Broiled Again!: The Hottest Urban Legends Going* (New York: Norton, 1989), p. 282.

What, for the medievalist, are the implications of identifying at least some medieval exempla as contemporary legends, prototypes of a genre still very much alive in our own time? In the first place, such an identification may allow us to recover something of the medieval exemplum's original oral and folkloric texture. Unsurprisingly, top-down accounts of exemplum collections, like John Van Engen's, have tended to emphasize the genre's academic qualities: "the impulse to compile exemplary stories . . . originated with learned clerics, making these sources at best only a very indirect indicator of the strength and quality of popular folklore and a much better indicator of clerical zeal to deepen Christian faith and practice."⁶⁰ But even those whom Van Engen opposes, like the *annalistes* Jacques le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt, have sometimes played down the exemplum's popular character: "with very few exceptions, the exemplum, a scholarly product, utilizes resources no less scholarly, be they written or oral. . . . On balance, it would be very rash to assert that the oral traditions which underlie very many exempla draw in any direct way upon folkloric values."⁶¹ By contrast, Bronislaw Geremek, a scholar who is fully prepared to recognize the oral qualities of the exempla ("their operation in medieval culture was founded not in writing but on the spoken word"), is correspondingly more open to their folkloric dimension: "monastic environments seem indeed to have provided a melting pot for popular tales and expressions of popular culture, and at the same time a center for their distribution."⁶² If nothing else, then, this study of contemporary-legend exempla like "The Vanishing Leper" and "The Murmuring Monk" may offer confirmation that "folklore" did not stop at the convent gate. It would certainly be rash to claim that such exempla are typical of the genre as a whole (a great many medieval exempla have very venerable literary pedigrees), but Paul Zumthor's concept of *mouvance* might provide one way of exploring the degree to which their particular qualities permeate the wider corpus.⁶³ Tracing signs of *mouvance* among different versions of the commonest exempla lies well beyond the scope of this chapter, but it would not be wholly surprising to

60. John Van Engen, "The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 531.

61. "Sauf exceptions rares, l'*exemplum*, récit savant, utilise une tradition elle aussi savant, qu'elle soit écrite ou orale. . . . En définitive, il serait bien téméraire d'affirmer que les traditions orales qui sont à la base de nombreux *exempla* proviennent toutes directement de la culture folklorique." Claude Bremond, Jacques Le Goff, and Jean-Claude Schmitt, *L'Exemplum* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982), pp. 87–89.

62. Geremek, "L'exemplum et la circulation de la culture": "le principal support de leur fonctionnement dans la culture médiévale n'était pas l'écriture mais la parole" (p. 177); "les milieux monastiques semblent justement avoir été à la fois le creuset où se fondaient les récits populaires et les thèmes de la culture des masses, et le centre de leur rayonnement" (p. 170).

63. Paul Zumthor, *La lettre et la voix: De la "littérature" médiévale*, Collection Poétique (Paris: Seuil, 1987), pp. 160–68.

find that the transmission of Latin exempla, like that of vernacular romance, shows unmistakable evidence of a pervasive interplay between written and oral cultures.

A second point follows on from this one. There is often an unspoken tendency, even among medievalists, to assume that people in the Middle Ages were less skeptical, perhaps even more gullible, than we are today. It reflects, I believe, a common Western attitude toward the past that E. P. Thompson has memorably termed “the enormous condescension of posterity”—in this case, perhaps, an inclination to infantilize our predecessors.⁶⁴ Nancy Partner, for instance, draws our attention to a proper scholarly circumspection about his sources on the part of the twelfth-century Augustinian canon William of Newburgh:

[On one occasion] he assures the reader that information of a certain event came “first from a person born in the locality, afterwards from the venerable archdeacon of the area, Stephen,” who was involved in the incident. Elsewhere we are told that reports came from a monk; “from an aged monk who was famous and influential in that area”; from “certain people of noble birth who were there”; from “men venerable and worthy of credence who claimed to have heard it from the Bishop of Le Mans himself.”⁶⁵

On such grounds as these, she notes that what makes William “seem accessible to modern historians is his unusual willingness to talk about testimony, plausibility, interpretation, and explanation—subjects that usually lie silent beneath the written surface of medieval books” (p. 52). But what I hope my study of the medieval contemporary legend has suggested is that William of Newburgh’s circumspection is not quite as unusual as might first appear. Like their modern counterparts, those who told medieval contemporary legends were clearly seeking to reassure their audiences, primarily because sensational stories, no matter how doctrinally correct, and regardless of whether they originated inside or outside the cloister, could still expect to encounter their due measure of skepticism. When Steven Justice, his tongue firmly in his cheek, recently asked whether the Middle Ages believed in their own miracles,⁶⁶ his very question exposed our growing discomfort with the old

64. E. P. Thompson. *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 13.

65. Nancy F. Partner, *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 118.

66. Steven Justice, “Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?” *Representations* 103 (2008): 1–20.

view of the medieval period as an “Age of Belief” (a characterization that, as John Van Engen has observed, becomes increasingly difficult to defend).⁶⁷ Perhaps we have now reached a point where we are finally ready to accept that medieval people might actually have told one another urban legends.

67. Van Engen, “Christian Middle Ages,” pp. 520–21. Cf. John H. Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe* (2005; London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010).

PART TWO 

Repetition and Continuity

THE CLAIMS OF HISTORY

Don't Cry for Me, Augustinus

Dido and the Dangers of Empathy

THOMAS HAHN

Dido's crushing refusal to acknowledge Aeneas's living presence in the underworld, her stony rebuff of his desperate pleas, struck T. S. Eliot as "perhaps the most telling snub in all poetry."¹ Some four hundred years after Virgil wrote, St. Augustine returned the favor, signally rejecting Dido as the most debilitating symptom of his early onset, textually induced spiritual sickness. A millennium after Augustine, Geoffrey Chaucer—writing a world apart from Trojans, Carthaginians, and Romans, in a lesser-written language that these peoples might have regarded as barbarous babble—rehabilitated Dido in a series of poems that made her, if not the central, then at least the most memorable and moving figure in what Eliot called "the classic of all Europe."² Chaucer's self-consciously un-Virgilian and non-Augustinian portrayals of Dido in *The House of Fame* and *The Legend of Good Women* constitute notable features of a distinctive vernacular poetics intended to generate engaged readerships and to touch the feelings of individual readers.

From the time of its composition, readers have recognized that Augustine's *Confessions* unfolds as a history and theory of reading. For the present purposes, I'd like to propose a simplified schema of the interpretive models Augustine presents, and then consider how these illuminate the poetic strategies of Chaucer and some later readers in writing and responding to the African Queen. I posit three phases in Augustine's development as a reader:

1. T. S. Eliot, "What Is a Classic?" in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber, 1975), p. 123.
2. Ibid., p. 130.

youthful naiveté and attachment to fictions, mature professionalism and engagement with textuality, and Christian exegesis and the elevation of the *sermo humilis* of Scripture.

Augustine introduces Dido in book 1 of the *Confessions*: having learned the grammar of classical Latin, he begins more advanced

studies, wherein I was required to learn by heart I know not how many of Aeneas's wanderings, although forgetful of my own, and to weep over Dido's death, because she killed herself for love . . . Who can be more wretched than the wretched one who takes no pity on himself, who weeps over Dido's death, which she brought to pass by love for Aeneas, and who does not weep over his own death, brought to pass by not loving you, O God, light of my heart. . . I did not love you, and I committed fornication against you. . . Love of this world is fornication against you. . . I did not weep over these facts, but I wept over the dead Dido "who sought her end by the sword."³

From the point of view of the mature and Christian Augustine (the author of the *Confessions*), this boyish crush provokes profound embarrassment and exasperation: that adolescent reader had nourished an infantile fixation on a character who never existed, transferring genuine feelings to empty fictions ("poetica illa figmenta," "illa inana" 1.13). In addition to this arrested emotional development, however, the school-boy Augustine has grossly misread the text, violating the protocols of interpretation accepted by expert, informed readers: any schooled interpreter would know, from the commentary of Augustine's near contemporary Servius or another similar source, that Dido and Aeneas did not inhabit the same historical moment, and that Virgil had concocted their romance as a *text* to be construed. The mature Augustine brings this home with his fastidiously professorial inquiry:

Let not these buyers and sellers of literature inveigh against me if I put this question to them: "Did Aeneas ever come to Carthage, as the poet says?" For if I do, the more unlearned will answer that they do not know; the more learned will even deny that it is true. (56)

3. *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. John K. Ryan (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1960), pp. 55–56. The quotation marks signal a direct citation of *Aeneid* VI.457. My arguments rely on the edition and commentary of James J. O'Donnell: *Augustine: Confessions*, vol. 1, *Introduction and Text*, and *Augustine: Confessions*, vol. 2, *Commentary on Books 1–7* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

The naive Augustine had failed to recognize that the African Queen was a textual effect, an invitation to analysis, not empathy. Moreover, in allowing himself to be touched by Dido's sorrow and vulnerability, he short-circuited the prescribed masculine economy of reading; proper interpretation required the male reader to identify with the male hero, Aeneas, and beyond that, with the patriarchal vision of the Roman poet Virgil. Masculine self-restraint enforced the rejection of Dido, whose sufferings take place as a kind of collateral damage in the civilizing mission of the Empire and the Romanization of the world, including Africa.

Augustine's youthful cathexis on Dido mimics the process by which the African Queen fell in love with Aeneas: both are seduced by the recital of the harrowing sufferings narrated by (or about) the Phrygian prince. Like Dido in book 2, Augustine hangs on every word of the story of "the wooden horse full of armed men, the burning of Troy, and Creusa's ghost," details that the mature Christian regards as "most sweet but empty spectacles" (57). His inclination to identify with Dido's sorrows (rather than Aeneas's heroism) was enflamed by school exercises that required boys to rewrite and respeak the words of characters, and we have at least one poetic declamation from fourth-century Carthage, an *Epistula Didonis*, that impersonates Virgil's queen (rather than Ovid's correspondent).⁴ As Augustine himself points out, such transgender performances artificially intensify emotional investment; in the prize-winning ventriloquizing of Juno that he performed as a schoolboy, Augustine must not only have touched his audiences, but moved himself as well.

What so appalls the Christian Augustine is the creation and indulgence of feeling for its own sake. He notes that "If I had been forbidden to read those tales, I would have grieved because I could not read what would cause me to grieve" (56): readers actively desire to feel bad, and texts merely serve as scripts or pretexts. Augustine's disgust at his youthful false consciousness and susceptibility to cheap thrills anticipates Hamlet's exasperated response to the player's speech: "What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, that he should weep for her?"⁵ Hamlet explicitly points up that his attraction to this set piece arises from its source—"Aeneas' tale to Dido": its anticipated power lies in its reprise of the stories of Priam and Troy that moved Dido and Augustine to tears. Hamlet's passionate bafflement insistently opens the question of how

4. For the most recent critical edition with introduction and commentary, see *Epistula Didonis ad Aeneam: Introduzione, testo, traduzione, e commento*, ed. Giannina Solimano (Genova: Università di Genova, 1988). Ethel Leigh Chubb's earlier edition contains an English translation: *An Anonymous Epistle of Dido to Aeneas; Anthologia Latina 83* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1920).

5. *Hamlet*, Act II, scene ii, lines 559ff., quoted from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

such words and images—"But in a fiction, a dream of passion," seemingly detached from our individual experiences, needs, and desires—can possess the power to touch our deepest feelings. What are the sources of our attachment to Hecuba, Aeneas, or Dido? How can we allow transparently empty fictions (Augustine's "poetica illa figmenta") to stir our deepest emotions?

The hysteria that besets the author of the *Confessions* seems if anything to surpass the corrupting and masochistic pleasure in grief and sorrow that, in his mature recollection, his earlier naive self experienced. This stems in part from the conviction that in his imaginative empathy for the suicidal queen, the schoolboy rehearses his own self-destruction. As an icon of excess and polymorphous passion, Dido fueled the young Augustine's desire to desire: he says he came to Carthage (*Cartago*), that "caldron (*sartago*) of shameful loves [which] seethed and sounded about me on every side," desiring to desire (*amans amare*; 3.1) and taking pleasure in feeling for its own sake. Yet whatever hostility the Christian reader and writer now feels toward Dido, the dominant emotion of the *Confessions* is a self-loathing brought on by ever allowing himself to be touched by Dido.

In the schools of Carthage, where he studied and taught, Augustine learned dispassionate philology and methodical analysis which, as correctives to emotional overinvestment in the text, assisted his progress to a new level of professionalized interpretation. In this second stage of reading, he learned never to be "caught in a barbarism or solecism," or to "violate the rules of grammar and utter the word *homo* without sounding the 'h' in the first syllable" (60–61)—that is, to avoid African provincialisms; mastering hypercorrect pronunciation and received scholarly opinion equipped Augustine to participate in a transnational interpretive orthodoxy and to uphold the Emperor's Latin—or, more precisely, the Poet's Latin. The self-conscious skills and labor necessary for the invention and imposition of meaning on any text introduced an aesthetic distance between reader or teacher and the text as object. Though one might align with Aeneas as masculine subject and political agent, and with the author's art and purpose, a mature reader did not experience raw empathy with individual characters, and indeed bad reading might be detected through the excessive responses of *amateurs*. The pleasure of the text arose not only from genuine learning (Aeneas never set foot in Carthage) and elegant insight, but from the deferred gratification provided by the reinforcement and acclaim of other expert readers.

Augustine's capacity to make meaning seems to have won him competitive success and esteem, not just in the schools, but in his professional life in his home city of Thagaste, in Carthage, and then briefly in Rome and Milan. In the last months before his baptism (in the year 386), during a period of

meditation and reading at Cassiciacum, Augustine and his disciples gave a day over to the reading and study of book 1 of the *Aeneid*, then later took an entire week to study books 2 to 4.⁶ In the *Confessions*, he quotes Virgil on Dido verbatim, offering a perverse tribute to the textual regime he now, in his third phase of reading as a Christian, rejects. He turns his back on the merely formal constraints of grammar and pronunciation, and on the preening competitiveness that drives the production of ever more subtle unpacking of meaning.

Moreover, the consequent removal of aesthetic distance in this third phase allows him to recoup the emotional engagement with the text he had felt in his first stage of reading: having put aside the expert's attachment to the *lectio difficilior* in favor of the *sermo humilis* of God's revealed word, he could now immerse himself in reading and indulge the extremities of emotion that overflow every page of the *Confessions*. The sexless, pre-adult voice that uncannily calls out "Tolle, lege" (a divine variation on the Nike logo: "Just read it!") permits Augustine to recover his inner child: no longer responsible for fashioning arcane or elegant interpretations out of his own viscera, he can now simply drink in the biblical verses, confident that the transcendent, pre-ordained meaning will freely course over him. In this most self-centered of personal histories, Augustine anticipates Foucault in allowing the discourse to speak through him, ideally (and paradoxically) relieving the interpreter of intentionality or even self-consciousness.

The *Confessions* stands as Augustine's rejection and reconstitution of his two earlier phases of reading. On one hand, he has repurposed the literary and moral failures of the naive reader into an uninhibited embrace of the Vulgate's unsophisticated verses. He has converted his compulsory study of the *errores* of "some guy named Aeneas" (1.13) into his end-directed pilgrimage to the Heavenly Jerusalem.⁷ The structural patterns and literary allusions

6. *Against the Academicians*, 1.15: "we had spent almost the whole day in attending to matters on the farm and in going over the first book of Virgil"; and 2.10: "for almost seven days . . . [we read] the three books of Virgil that follow the first, and studying them, as it seemed to be a suitable occupation at the time." *St. Augustine: Against the Academics*, trans. John J. O'Meara (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1950), pp. 53, 74.

7. I choose this translation to convey what I read as Augustine's dismissal of classical studies as utterly vain and arbitrary: "illae [litterae] quibus tenere cogebar Aeneae nescio cuius errores, oblitus errorum meorum" (*those studies in which I was forced to track the wanderings of I don't know what Aeneas, oblivious of my own wanderings*). O'Donnell concedes "an undeniable air of mild disdain" but then cautions that "the disdain must not be overemphasized" (*Augustine: Confessions* 77). Ryan's translation (quoted in the second paragraph) side-steps the issue of tone by applying "nescio" to the number of wanderings (for which there's no warrant in the text). In reassigning a text he must have known with all his heart to the dustbin of the casual or contingent factoid (Aeneas *ought* to be forgettable), Augustine underscores the absolute divide between sacred truth and worldly fictions. He recollects his own peril in

that he has built into the *Confessions* continue to challenge the skills of the most sophisticated second-stage readers and philologists. Yet a full understanding of the text's subtleties forces the acknowledgment that in quoting, mimicking, and reorienting the *Aeneid*, Augustine is undoing Virgil's epic: in the end, by unloving Dido, the *Confessions* outpaces the Carthaginian queen, barring Aeneas from Africa by dismissing Virgil from the texture of the Christian reading process. Such a move opens the possibility for writing Dido differently.

In thinking about Augustine's reading program, it's worth pausing for a moment to reflect on how remarkable it was that a model of patristic exegesis based on his arguments dominated Chaucer studies for decades in the twentieth century.⁸ As Brian Stock observes, Augustine advances an ascetic regime of reading that finds its pleasure in "the satisfaction that results from the quest for a world-denying way of life through the study of the Bible."⁹ Augustine seems to show little interest in "spoiling the *Aeneid*," ransacking its treasures for Christian recycling. His dismissal of the Poet, and arguably his most compelling character, makes it difficult to believe that he would have countenanced applying his method of reading to other compositions in Latin, let alone to an obscure vernacular with scant literary history like Chaucer's English.

The school exercises that Augustine found so tedious and oppressive—being forced "to learn by heart the wanderings of some guy named Aeneas"—seem over time to have detached Dido from the ambit of Virgilian narrative. Across thirty generations of medieval study, schoolboys seemed regularly to cathect on the African Queen, and ultimately to invent for her an autonomous life outside the classroom. This distinctively "medieval" Dido speaks in the first person, with a lyric voice; though epic events still constitute the ground of her persona, she presents herself not as an agonized, desperate victim, but as a self-conscious subject, elegantly articulating desire in language.¹⁰ Dido

being lost in Dido ("errorum meorum") by invoking the Queen's own words to Aeneas; in the last two lines of book 1 she invites her guest to relate "erroresque tuos nam te iam septima portat / omnibus errantem teris et fluctibus aestas" (*your own wanderings, for already the seventh summer overtakes you, wandering over all lands and seas*). Augustine repeatedly deploys this practice of undoing Virgil through requotation. Sabine MacCormack traces some of these patterns in *The Shadows of Poetry: Vergil in the Mind of Augustine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 89–100 and *passim*.

8. Thanks in particular to D. W. Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962).

9. Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 30. My account of Augustine's interpretive practice makes extensive use of Stock's insights.

10. Marjorie Curry Woods provides an account of schoolroom practice and youthful male attachment in "Weeping for Dido: Epilogue on a Premodern Rhetorical Exercise in the

appears allusively as well in male-voiced lyric poems, often as “mea Dido,” an intercessor, rival, or beloved who seems familiarly present in this world of learned verse. Through strong feeling and self-possession, these avatars of the African Queen establish themselves as notably independent, in their self-presentation and in their disconnect from the portrayals of Virgil and Augustine.

The Didos whose sufferings Chaucer retells owe much to Virgil and Ovid, as his narrators expressly affirm. Beyond this—without claiming that Chaucer perversely revoices a thousand years of schoolboy crushes—we can detect in his Dido a manifest debt to the lyric traditions of the Latin Middle Ages, and to the French *roman antique*.¹¹ Yet such traditions hardly explain Chaucer’s exceptional fixation on Dido, which, if not the equal of Augustine’s for frenzied narcissism, nonetheless seems invested in the desire to desire, and in the experience of feeling for its own sake. Chaucer’s narrators repeatedly present themselves as inexperienced, but not adolescent; as identifying with a literary character, but not as naive; as mature readers nonetheless resistant to mature sexual relations (as modeled in normative heterosexuality). Augustine’s powerful desire finds its natural outlet in the fleshpots of Carthage or in the nameless concubine he acquires and then jettisons. Chaucer’s narrators thrive on lack of consummation: like the narrator of the *Parliament of Fowles*, they dwell in possibility, suspended in longing: “For bothe I had thinge which that I nolde / And eke I ne had thyng that I wolde” (PF 90).¹²

The narrators of *The House of Fame* and *The Legend of Good Women* have no designs on Dido: unlike Tarquyn in the *Legend of Lucrece*, they cast no

Postmodern Classroom,” in *Latin Grammar and Rhetoric: From Classical Theory to Medieval Practice*, ed. Carol Dana Lanham (New York: Continuum, 2002), pp. 284–94, and “Boys Will Be Women: Musings on Classroom Nostalgia and the Chaucerian Audience(s),” in *Speaking Images: Essays in Honor of V. A. Kolve*, ed. R. F. Yeager and Charlotte C. Morse (Asheville, NC: Pegasus, 2001), pp. 143–66. For a comprehensive collection of ancient and medieval responses to Dido, see Jan M. Ziolkowski and Michael C. J. Putnam, *The Virgilian Tradition: The First Fifteen Hundred Years* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

11. For accounts of these high-medieval traditions concerning Dido, see the texts collected by Ziolkowski and Putnam, as well as Ralph Hexter, “Didonian Dido,” in *Innovations of Antiquity*, ed. Ralph Hexter and Daniel Selden (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 332–84; Peter Dronke, “Dido’s Lament: From Medieval Latin Lyric to Chaucer,” in *Kontinuität und Wandel: Lateinische Poesie von Naevius bis Baudelaire*, ed. U. J. Stache, W. Maaz, and F. Wagner (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1986), pp. 364–90 (who presents a different perspective on Latin and vernacular than that offered here); Christopher Baswell, “The Romance *Aeneid*,” in *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the “Aeneid” from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 168–219; Barbara Nolan, *Chaucer and the Tradition of the Roman Antique* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Laura Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 124–46.

12. I quote Chaucer’s poetry from *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) and use the abbreviations of individual works provided there.

predatory, proprietary gaze that “caughte . . . desyr” and “blynde lust,” and that finds itself possessively “Th’ymage of hire recordynge alwey newe” (LGW 1750–60). In contrast to the “hardy” Tarquyn and Augustine, the Chaucerian narrators are sexual nonstarters: they “knowe not Love in dede” (PF 8); they “peyne [hem] to preyse [love’s] arte, / Al though [they] hadden never part” (HF 628). The God of Love regards Geoffrey’s *alter ego* as a worm, in the arts of love “nothyng able” (LGW 246), indeed a positive obstruction when it comes to desire. Like the young Augustine—and this after reading and writing many books, including presumably the *Aeneid*—the narrators identify against their own masculinity: the Dreamer in *The House of Fame* scolds Aeneas for “the harme, the routh” caused by his “untrouthe” (HF 383), and goes on to inventory another half-dozen false heroes. The narrator of the Dido *Legend* expatiates on the queen’s generosity, compassion, magnanimity, and truth, while vilifying Aeneas’s duplicity. The impenetrable injunction at the end of the *Legend* of Phyllis—“trusteth as in love no man but me” (LGW 2561)—stands simply as the most outrageous instance of this persistent cross-identification in which Chaucer simultaneously asserts and annuls his masculine subject position.

Dido’s Chaucerian narrators, then, identify against other male characters, reproving masculine adventure in the form of sexual conquest, and evading prescribed homosocial alignments (Aeneas) and the affinities embodied in masculine ideals and systems of meaning (Virgil). Chaucer presents these mediating agents not as cases of development arrested at some premature stage, but as fully elaborated perspectives that the narrators choose to occupy. Accepting the reality that fictionalized readers will never “grow out of” such fixations denaturalizes the integrated protocols of interpretation taught in the schools, and their program of producing homogeneous (male) readerships for Latin texts such as the *Aeneid* or the Vulgate. To detach the literary cathexis of his narrators from the predatory, proprietary motives of normative (if stereotypical) masculine desire pressures the reader to imagine Dido differently; the indeterminacy, longing, suspension, compassion, and/or resistance modeled by these male mediators replay her sufferings in ways that subvert or supplement the narratives of Virgil, Ovid, or Augustine. Chaucer’s narrators allow themselves (and their readers) to be touched by Dido in ways that made Augustine bristle, and that Virgil may never have intended, and they offer this as one defining feature of a new vernacular poetics. I’d like to explore some of the implications of such touching, focusing mainly on *The House of Fame*.¹³

13. For a stimulating overview of how medievalists might write the history of emotions, see Sarah McNamer, “Feeling,” in *Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm (New York: Oxford Uni-

In book 2, the Eagle apprises Geoffrey that Jupiter has sent this “sely . . . avisyon” (513) “in som recompensacion” (665) for the poet’s promotion of an experience of which he has no firsthand knowledge:

Certeyn, he hath of the routhe
 That thou so longe trewely
 Hast served so ententyfly
 Hys blynde newew Cupido,
 And faire Venus also,
 Withoute guerdon ever yit,
 And never-the-lesse hast set thy wit—
 Although that in thy hed ful lyte is—
 To make bookys, songes, dytees,
 In ryme or elles in cadence,
 As thou best canst, in reverence
 Of Love and of hys servantes eke,
 That have hys servyse soght, and seke;
 And peynest the to preyse hys art,
 Although thou haddest never part. (614–28)

Alone in his study, poring over his books deep into the night, head aching, Geoffrey acts as the agent of Love as at once a cosmic and cultural system, but he possesses no agency of his own in love: “thou maist goo in the daunce / Of hem that hym lyst not avaunce” (639–40). Book 1 sets out a prime instance of the “preysynges” (635) that have earned the God’s favor, recreating Dido as a mechanism for triggering emotions at second hand, through empathy. Dido’s woe generates feelings in the Dreamer, and presumably in his readers, that are genuine, but directly dependent upon the synesthesia of visual, verbal, and aural stimuli within the quasi-religious precincts of the “temple ymad of glas” (120). The Dreamer experiences a kind of sensory overload as he encounters “moo ymages . . . moo ryche tabernacles, / And with perre moo pynacles, / And moo curiouse portreytures, / And queynte maner of figures / Of olde werk, then I saugh ever” (121–27). This multimedia extravaganza culminates in the ekphrasis of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, with Dido recast as the central character. As the book unfolds, the Dreamer exhibits a kind of “emotional contagion”

versity Press, 2007), pp. 241–57. McNamer’s recent book-length study, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), offers further models of analysis. Steele Nowlin, “The *Legend of Good Women* and the Affect of Invention,” *Exemplaria* 25 (2013): 16–35, provides arguments that complement (and contrast with) some of the readings offered here. My reference to “emotion scripts,” “emotional regimes,” and “emotional communities” redeploys McNamer’s categories and phrasing.

as he responds to the “ymages . . . [and] richesse / As I saugh graven in this chirhe” (472–73); he feels touched, not through some direct social or sexual relation with another human being, but through the pictures, legends, and shared texts that induce an affect at once religious and erotic.¹⁴

The Dreamer’s experience of simulated love reproduces in some respects the feelings, the cheap thrills, that Augustine so deplored about his youth. The Bishop recognized that performing school exercises—impersonating Juno, or perhaps Dido—intensified his identification with pagan rage or passion. The Dreamer mouths fragments of Virgil and Ovid, and then goes on to intone a set of vernacular arias for Dido to perform. The Dreamer respeaks the sorrow of the African Queen, not in lines from “Virgile in Eneydos” or “the Epistle of Ovyde” (378–79), but in words invented by the poet:

In suche wordes gan to pleyne
Dydo of hir grete peyne,
As me mette redely—
Non other auctour alegge I. (311–14)

Dido’s plight—in writing, image, and sound—creates an affective resonance in the narrator (“But wel-away, the harm, the routhe, / That hath betyd for such untrouthe . . . / That for to thynken hyt, a tene is” [383–87]), and invites a similar response from the poem’s readers.¹⁵ Dido’s words work as an emotional script that doesn’t create feelings or simply describe them: Chaucer’s narrator—“Non other auctour alegge I”—supersedes the ancients, articulating a model for the recognition, expression, and sharing of emotions. *For to thynken hyt* plays out not so much as a cognitive process as an emotional one; providing audiences access and stimulus for actualizing their own feelings reproduces in a new key the sadness and loss Augustine felt even at the prospect of not reading affecting stories.

The reprise of Virgil in *The House of Fame* reforms “the classic of all Europe” from a foundational epic retailing masculine triumphalist adventures, coded as sexual conquest, into the story of Dido’s tears, designed to evoke empathy. The narrator Geoffrey’s situation in the temple of glass dupli-

14. For “emotional contagion” as the conscious or unconscious sharing of feeling, see Elaine Hatfield, J. T. Cacioppo, and R. L. Rapson, *Emotional Contagion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

15. In his account of affects, the psychologist Silvan Tomkins posited an interpersonal mirroring behavior, affective resonance. See *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), and more generally, for links to literary responsiveness, Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

cates that of Virgil's Aeneas in book 1, as he stands before the ekphrasis of the Trojan War engraved on the temple of Juno/Astarte. In gazing at the images of his own sorrows, Virgil's epic hero must make proper sense of received stories, asking how experience and suffering—"lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt"—might be redeemed through sublimation in art and narrative. Virgil movingly acknowledges the tears aroused by our world, and the plight of humanity that touches the mind (*for to thynken hyt, a tene is*), but the *Aeneid* moves beyond affective response and empathy (or tears for Dido, despite Anna's pleas) to assurance of the real and permanent achievements of Empire. *The House of Fame* centralizes Dido's sufferings, reducing the epic hero not to some guy named Aeneas, but to a traitor whose name will live in infamy. In fixating on the African Queen as sorrowing subject rather than sexual object, Geoffrey allows Dido to touch him in ways that elude normative heterosexual desire and that conjure novel modes of identification.

A contemporary analog for the emotional contagion that overtakes the narrator in *The House of Fame* occurs in *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*. While Julian by no means regarded her "vision" (311) as a dream, or the fiction of a dream, it unfolds nonetheless as a sustained justification for the legitimacy of spiritual and affective experience articulated in the mother tongue.¹⁶ Julian begins her account by detailing her petition to Christ for "kinde compassion, and the wound of willfull longing to God"; this latter sense of endless, suspended attachment—a longing for an ungraspable God, as well as an unquenchable feeling of belonging to God—she says, "dwelled with me continually" (68–71). For Julian, this intense affective state persists as unfulfilled desire, a mimicking of the "thrist" and "love longyng" that Christ feels for and shares with all creatures. Moreover, Julian's vivid, deeply emotional incarnational theology focuses both on transgender identification—Jesus as mother—and the potentialities of being touched by and touching God, even penetrating his/her wounds, in a process of being born again. Like *The House of Fame*, Julian's narrative is largely unconstrained by vernacular precedent, and therefore wildly experimental. Julian's acceptance, even celebration, of

16. I quote from *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. Georgia Ronan Crampton, Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 1994), according to line numbers. My arguments about the resources of vernacular culture draw heavily on the synthetic work of Nicholas Watson; see, in particular, "Conceptions of the Word: The Mother Tongue and the Incarnation of God," *New Medieval Literatures* 1 (1997): 85–124, and "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitution of 1409," *Speculum* 70 (1995): 822–64. I have also consulted text and notes in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: "A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman" and "A Revelation of Love,"* ed. Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).

endless longing forms a counterpart to Geoffrey's unfulfilled devotion to the pagan God of Love, and even more, to his attempt to express his own sense of arrested cathexis, his nonproprietary identification with the desiring Dido. Though mystic and poet may seem ill-sorted, they share a distinctive vernacular milieu; both attempt to endow writing in English with autonomous value and meaning through the creation of a Dickinsonesque capacity to dwell in possibility.

Chaucer's veneration of Dido as an ambiguously desiring and desired subject makes full use of her ancient and medieval prehistory, of her promiscuous and polymorphous circulation as a text. From Virgil onwards, representations of the African Queen relied upon her broad cultural recognition and affective resonance to move readers and spectators. This stream of images established her as a "real" presence (historical or not), and, more importantly, conveyed to audiences that they participated in a community of feeling and response. *The House of Fame* enshrines Dido in a "temple" and "chirche," complete with "tabernacles" and "ymages" that partake in a conventional, easily recognizable iconography, and reinforced by shared narratives familiar to the "faithful." These "portreytures" and performance scripts intensify Dido's power to touch the Dreamer and the reader/listener, in the same way that the intimately familiar textual and visual authority of Juno or Dido created emotional resonance for Augustine, and that images of Christ and his mother did for Julian. As a fantasia on literary reputation and reception, *The House of Fame* visits new potentialities for the experience of sexual and secular desire, queering normative identifications and expectations through a Dido who excites feelings by touching and being touched.¹⁷

The link that Chaucer forges between writing and affect explicitly addresses the limits and possibilities of vernacular poetics, and explores the degree to which writing in English might generate feeling, and in the process accrue cultural capital. The Dido portraits in *The House of Fame* and *The Legend of Good Women* go out of their way to trouble conventional processes of reading and "normal" modes of identification, evoking feelings for their own sake in a distinctly non-Augustinian fashion. Their distance from psychologically driven, "natural" feminine and masculine positions appears in a throwaway remark by David Wallace: he dismisses some verses that Boccaccio creates for his Criseida as "cliché-ridden and woodenly melodramatic: little better, in fact, than the 'compleynt' of Dido in *The House of Fame*, a

17. My argument attempts to borrow and expand upon the structures and analyses Carolyn Dinshaw offers in "Chaucer's Queer Touches / A Queer Touches Chaucer," *Exemplaria* 7.1 (1995): 75–92, and *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 39–40, 150–52, 161–65, and *passim*.

passage which the mature Chaucer could hardly have recalled without some embarrassment.”¹⁸ The reading offered here contends that we should not assess these poems on a scale of progressive development (where mature excludes melodrama) but consider them experiments in vernacular stylistics. Augustine produced the *City of God* as a postcolonial text, written (according to his conceit) from the perspective not of Africa but of the Heavenly Jerusalem; he strove to create a new literary register and new possibilities of reading by exalting the biblical *sermo humilis* over the writings of the metropolitan center. Chaucer, composing in a vernacular whose lesser-written status and relative lack of literary precedents ensued directly from colonial conquest, sought for ways to elevate its status. For Augustine, the message—God’s revealed word—is all, and the medium—the “vulgar” Latin of the *Vetus Latinus*—negligible; for Chaucer, on the other hand, finding ways to move an audience in the mother tongue may have been more important than actual content, and may explain why he experimentally reshapes Dido, creating and responding to the question he asks in Dido’s voice: “what woman will ye of me make?” (LGW 1305).

Bishop Gavin Douglas (1476–1522), the first translator of the *Aeneid* from Latin to English (1513), enacts a complex and decisive confrontation with Chaucer through Dido. As a classicist and Humanist, he necessarily regards Virgil as “of Latyne poetis prince,” “Maister of maisteris, sweit sours and springand well” (9).¹⁹ On the other hand, Chaucer is the vernacular ancestor who sanctions Douglas’s own vernacular poetry: “For as he standis beneth Virgill in gre [degree], / Ondir hym als fer [just so far] I grant myself to be” (407–8). Yet Douglas feels compelled to voice qualms about the ways in which “My mastir Chauser gretly Virgill offendit . . . He has gretly the prynce of poetis grevit” (410, 418), “Sayand he followit Virgillis lantern tofor” (413), but radically misrepresenting the authentic original. Douglas seems confounded that somehow Chaucer is still stuck on Dido, that the great poet’s professed dedication to the project of poetry goes hand in hand with his oblique, finally nondeferential attitude toward its sacred texts. He recognizes the historic possibilities that Chaucer’s writing opened for the mother tongue in Britain, but can scarcely countenance the eccentric, emotional susceptibilities that distract Chaucer from submitting to the masculine authority of Father Virgil. While

18. David Wallace, *Chaucer and the Early Writings of Boccaccio* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Brewer, 1985), p. 128.

19. Quotations from *The Poetical Works of Gavin Douglas*, ed. John Small, vol. 2 (1874), checked against the modernization by Gordon Kendal, *Gavin Douglas: The Aeneid*, MHRA Tudor and Stuart Translations 7 (1) (London: MHRA, 2011). Kendal’s introduction and notes contain up-to-date accounts of recent scholarship.

Bishop Douglas offers no Augustinian-style critique of Chaucer as a Christian reader, he would surely be in agreement with the mature Augustine that the English poet's being touched by Dido makes it impossible to take him straight. Though Douglas claims indulgently that he would "Excus Chaucer fra all maner repruffis" (446), he marks his overidentification with Dido up to the fact that "he was evir, God wait, all womanis frend" (449)—when, presumably, he had fully expected him, as a reader and writer, to occupy the ordinarily unarticulated and otherwise unexamined but normative position of *men's* friend.

Douglas's observation that Chaucer, or his fictionalized readers, showed too much feeling and too little textuality finds some confirmation about a decade later. In *The Boke of Fame*, the third volume of his comprehensive anthology of Chaucer's works (1526), Richard Pynson printed an apocryphon, "The Letter of Dydo to Eneas." This poem might well constitute, as Julia Boffey has observed, a direct response to the narrator's direction in *The House of Fame*: "Rede Virgile in Eneydos / Or the Epistle of Ovyde" (379) if you wish to know more of the African Queen.²⁰ The "Letter," which is not expressly ascribed to Chaucer, offers a compressed translation from a French version of *Heroides* 7. The poet—who might have been a woman or a man; I've arbitrarily chosen female pronouns—speaks at length in the "Prologe" of her own failure of joy in love that has "Constrayned me to write this rufull songe / Of poore Dydo."²¹ The speaker literally inhabits the text of Dido, as reader, writer, and translator; she repeatedly calls attention to her own textuality: simply crafting the poem, writing in the person of Dido, "causeth my hand to shake"; "My hand quaketh whan I write thy name." The poem becomes not just the record, but the source and performance of feeling: "For great furye . . . I ayenst hym take"; his "dede I hate and shall during my brethe." She fuels her outrage simply by recording her empathy for "pore Dydo," and intoning her betrayer's failures: "false Ene" has "forsaken [the queen] by great wronge," exemplifying "false untrouth, unkinde delyng and double," and selfishly indulging his "false delyte." The "knot" of marriage that Juno "trusted shulde last / Is nowe become bothe lose and unstedfast," for "this untrue man" did "Brake the promyse." Her compassion for Dido finds affective resonance among the

20. Julia Boffey, "Richard Pynson's *Book of Fame* and the Letter of Dido," *Viator* 19 (1988): 330–53. Marilyn Desmond, *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Medieval Aeneid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 48–49 and notes, offers further commentary and context for the "Letter." The injunction to consult ancient sources occurs as well in the *Legend*: "whoso wol al this letter have in mynde, / Rede Ovyde, and in hym he shal it fynde" (1366).

21. I cite the text from Pynson's print of *The Boke of Fame* (1526; STC 5068). The "Prologe" consists of nine rhyme-royal stanzas, and precedes the translation. "Lenvoy of the translatour" in two stanzas follows the poem. Pynson also includes a woodcut suicide before the text.

gods themselves: the Muses “wepe everychone / For pore Dydo, thus pytously arayde.” She explicitly invokes the Chaucerian interface when she calls upon “Lady Fame” to “Blowe up thy trumpe of sclaunder and of shame.” In the “Lenvoy of the translatour” she addresses “good ladyes,” impersonating Chaucer’s narrator in telling them to “Beware of love, sithe men be full of crafte.” In addition to emphasizing compassion for Dido and loathing for Aeneas, the piece highlights the persona’s strong emotions not simply as responses to the translated letter, but to Dido as an extratextual figure. In this way it enacts a remarkable rehearsal of how readers might re-experience Chaucerian cathexis in the reading and retelling of Dido’s story.

I would like to conclude this account of reading Dido by considering two ballads, both of which may originate in the sixteenth century. The first, “Aeneas & Dido” (printed in 1618), presents a literary parody that confirms the established popular stature of the African Queen’s story.²² Its stanzas eschew ballad meter, and it exhibits detailed familiarity with the plot of the *Aeneid*. Having gotten to the point where Aeneas has left Dido to “wayle and weepe,” the composer adds a coda that dismisses the queen’s tears, but for reasons quite apart from Augustine’s:

Dido wept: but what of this?
 The gods wold have itt soe;
 Aeneas nothing did amisse,
 ffor he was fforcte to goe.
 Learne, Lordings, Learne, no ffaith to keepe
 With your loves, but lett them weepe—
 Itts folly to be true.
 And lett this story serve your turne,
 And lett twenty Didoes burne
 Soe you gett dalye new.²³ (21–30)

The final words stand Augustine’s objections on their head, dispatching the Queen’s sorrows, and the entire classical tradition, not because they consist in beautiful but vain fictions, but because they might impede the seizing of pleasures “dalye new.”

22. The song was first printed in *The Ayres that were sung and played at Brougham Castle in Westmerland, in the King’s Entertainment . . .*, composed by Mr. George Mason and Mr. John Earsden (London: Thomas Snodham, 1618). I quote from the text in *Bishop Percy’s Folio Manuscript. Ballads and Romances*, ed. John W. Hales and Frederick J. Furnivall, vol. 3 (London: Trübner, 1868), pp. 260–62.

23. Line 21 (the first line quoted here) clearly parodies the King James Version of John 11:35, “Jesus wept.”

This “ayre” of “Aeneas & Dido” seems to feed off the genuinely popular sixteenth-century ballad called “Queene Dido” in the Percy Folio, but entitled “The Wandering Prince of Troy” in the nine separate surviving broadsides, dating from the early seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries. A number of unrelated ballads invoke it in specifying their performance to “The Tune of Queene Dido,” and a satire of 1608 addresses “ale-knights . . . that sing *Queen Dido* over a cup, and tell strange news over an ale-pot!”²⁴ This oft-sung tale retells in twenty-three stanzas the encounter in Carthage, where Aeneas tells the story of Troy’s fall, “with words sooe sweete and sighes soe deepe, / that oft he made them all to weepe” (23–24).²⁵ No one, however, seems more touched than the Trojan Prince himself; he cries so profusely

That where he sate, the place was wett
As though he had seene those warrs againe—
Soe that the Queene, with ruth therfore,
Said “Worthy prince! enough! no more!” (27–29)

While Dido spends the night in tears, with “boyling brest,” Aeneas and his remnant skulk off. After a brief bout of “sighes and sobbs,” Dido “peerced her hart” (66). Anna’s account of the queen’s death catches up to Aeneas while he sojourns “in an Ile / in Greycya” (79–80); as he ponders its words

His Losty courage then did ffall:
And straight appeared in his sight
Queene Didoes Ghost, both grim and pale. (99–101)

No need here for a trip to the underworld! Far from snubbing the Trojan Prince, Dido’s ghost immediately makes eye contact and engages in direct speech:

“Therfore prepare thy flitting soule
To wander with me in the aire
Where deadly greeffe shall make itt howle . . .
Thy date is past, and death is come.” (109–14)

24. Hales and Furnivall quote this passage from *The Penniless Parliament of Threadbare Poets*, p. 499, and provide a number of other allusions that document its popularity (pp. 260–61). In their headnote to “Queene Dido” they mention that a ballad entitled “The Wandering Prince of Troy” appears in the Registers of the Stationers Company in 1564–65.

25. I again quote from Hales and Furnivall, pp. 502–6. Among the ballads that instance “The Tune of Queene Dido” are *The Spanish tragedy* . . . and *The Dutchesse of Suffolkes calamity*.

As in Virgil, Aeneas pleads, this time, however, for his own life:

“O stay a while, thou lovely sprite!
Be not soe hasty to convay
My soule into eternall night . . .
O doe not ffrowne! thy angry looke
Hath made my breath my liffe fforsooke.” (115–20)

This Dido has no tears to shed, and immediately brings the curse she had uttered in the *Aeneid* to pass:

A multitude of uglye ffeinds
About this woffull prince did dance . . .
His body then they tooke away,
And no man knew his dying day. (134–38)

Queene Dido turns Virgil’s “most telling snub” into a raucous haunting; the high-spirited revenge that Dido exacts seems calculated to cause cheers and laughter. The highly compressed episodes resolve with finality, and with no hint of emotional confusion or space for empathy. Neither narrative treats Dido as an exotic queen: rather she is a familiar ballad heroine, susceptible to strong feeling and drastic action.

Though these songs reveal some familiarity with the *Aeneid*’s plot, their *métier* is comic exaggeration, and their emotional range ping-pongs between sentimental ruefulness and cold-blooded glee, with no space for complicated or charged emotions. Their performative origins resonate with the lurid entertainments on which young Augustine wasted his time; in their reworking of Virgil, they consequently lack the deeply informed resistance that both the bishop and the poet show toward the master text. In jilting Dido to avoid betraying his God, Augustine rejects human sexuality but keeps heteronormativity in place through the reflexes of self-chastisement and misogyny. Chaucer, in redeeming Dido as a loving but betrayed subject, displaces normative alignments of femininity and masculinity. Attempts to unpack polymorphous sexualities in Chaucer have routinely centered on the portrait of the Pardoner in the General Prologue: the Pilgrim Chaucer’s inscrutable remark “I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare” (I.691) has become a flashpoint for arguments about the categories and limits used by medieval people to know and inhabit “natural” or culturally recognizable gender roles.²⁶ As an

26. In his essay “Queer Theory,” Glenn Burger pinpoints interpretive strategies that register “the desire for a more mobile, less stable, set of identifications than those provided by the

arbiter of sexual identities, however, the Pilgrim himself remains indeterminate or absent; he seems as much at variance with any benchmark of “manly man” as the ambiguous male personas Dido so moves in *The House of Fame* or *The Legend of Good Women*. The Host’s mystified query “What man artow?” (VII. 695) does not exclusively address issues of occupation or estate, but suggests the same elusiveness, suspension, and longing—the same indeterminacies concerning “mature” masculinity—that mark these earlier narrators. In its odd imbalances, contradictions, and noncompletions, the manhood staged through this Chaucerian cathexis on Dido constructs a model of masculinity whose emotional scripts trouble heteronormativity; it refuses service to a single, standard axis of identification, using narrative absorption and affective response to project and explore the processes and possibilities of identities and identification.²⁷

The devotional perspective of Julian of Norwich may well have registered her contemporary’s poetry as trivial or incomprehensible, yet her writings explore an emotional landscape whose contours resemble those invented by Chaucer, and I would like to return to them in these concluding observations. The two writers converge in their attempts to articulate vernacular feelings that exceed ordinary religious compassion or conventional heterosexual desire. Julian’s experimental use of her mother tongue to express intensity of feeling, her ambivalence at her immersion in endless longing, and her unfixing of gender and sexual desire arise from her unique encounter with God. Though some medieval and modern readers might deem it inappropriate or irrelevant to revoice her words in the context of artful, secular, allusion-filled poetry, I would argue that her phrases illuminate the affective range reached for by Chaucer. Her invocation of “love longyng” as the condition of existence in this world—“it longyth properly to us . . . to longen and desiren with al our myghts”; “we may never blyn [cease] of willing ne of longyng” (1039; 1607; 226)—resembles the middling state of the narrators in *The House of Fame* and *The Legend of Good Women*. Their empathy for Dido, their identification with her, their arrested desire leave them in perpetual suspension, caught up in and between feelings; Julian expresses a similar experience of inhabiting an endless middle ground: “And thus is this medle [middling condition] so mervelous in us that onethys [scarcely] we knowen

categories of an often essentializing identity politics (where ‘gay-lesbian’ replaces the previously normative terms of the homo-hetero equation)”; see *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, ed. Steve Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 432–47, pp. 436–37.

27. Such a reading again parallels Burger’s remarks about the ways in which queer theory provides the means to historicize medieval and modern regimes of gender and sexuality, and to trace their differences, while at the same time being “as open as possible to the fullness of identifications that desire can excite” (“Queer Theory,” pp. 437–38)

of ourselfe or of our evyn [fellow] Cristen in what wey we stonden, for the merveloushede of this sundry felyng" (2089). This self-conscious engrossment in not knowing where one stands, in desiring endlessly and embracing that longing, underwrites Julian's account of her vision, and finds real resonance in the affect described in Chaucer's fictions. Both Julian and the dream vision narrators persistently claim this middling state of the desiring subject for themselves: "And thus we stonden in this medlur [middling condition] all the dayes of our life"; "And yet I stond in desire" (2101; 1591).

Chaucer's fixation on Dido as a pre-Christian martyr of love in the *Legend* makes her an apt figure of transference, through whom emotions associated with religious feeling or devotional affect might be appropriated and rechanneled in secular poetry. Dido's troubling question—"What woman will ye of me make"—invites readers to consider the ways in which emotional scripts can make and unmake gender. Moreover, such *making* applies not only to women when men wield the pen—or to women when a woman, like Julian, wields the pen—but also to polymorphous masculinities articulated in emergent vernacular discourses. In declaring their deep attachment to Dido, Chaucer's personas stand as a species of "feeling-experiments," who provide and provoke emotional patterns and possibilities in their various audiences. Our own responses center ultimately on the ways in which these paths towards loving Dido model new ways to engage the text, and to engage self-consciously with the feelings we bring to and take from the text.

The New Plow and the Old

Law, Orality, and the Figure of Piers the Plowman in B 19

STEPHEN YEAGER

It is a widely acknowledged but still puzzling fact about Piers Plowman that despite his name, the poem's titular character only rarely uses a plow. Though there are 43 occurrences of the word *plowman* spread throughout the twenty passus of the B version, there are only fifteen occurrences of the word *plou3* on its own, and only in passus 6 and 19 does the plow in question belong to Piers.¹ In this chapter I will suggest that the "plow" in "plowman" may refer not only to the farm implement, as it does in modern English, but to a secondary meaning of Middle English *plou3*, a "unit of arable land."² As I will demonstrate, "Piers the Plowman" is therefore not only a man of the earth, but a man of the earth as it had been divided for administrative purposes since the earliest records of English law. Andrew Galloway has written about *Piers Plowman's* "depiction of ancient models of true justice, where—in a paradox found throughout the century—the fullest claims for freedom from the legal oppressions of tradition are expressed."³ As I will

1. The B-version occurrences of the word are in passus 3 (309), 6 (102, 103 [*plowpote*], 105, 112, 125, 155, 163, 169), 7 (124), 13 (370), 14 (29), 15 (125), and 19 (266, 335, 426). The only occurrence of the verb *plouen* in the B version is in the prologue; in the field of folk, "some putten hem to plou3" (Prol.20). Joseph Wittig, *Piers Plowman Concordance* (London and New York: Athlone, 2001). For ease of reference, all citations are from the Athlone edition of the B version: William Langland, *Piers Plowman: The B Version; Will's Visions of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better, and Do-Best*, ed. E. Talbot Donaldson and George Kane (London: Athlone, 1975).

2. MED, s.v. "plough," def. 3, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=byte&byte=145069693&egdisplay=compact&egs=145114677> (accessed May 31, 2012).

3. Andrew Galloway, "Making History Legal: Piers Plowman and the Rebels of Fourteenth-Century England," in *William Langland's "Piers Plowman": A Book of Essays*, ed. Kathleen Hewett-Smith (New York: Routledge, 2001), 7–39, p. 11.

argue, such ancient models are found not only in the classical and biblical sources Galloway describes but also in the legal traditions of England itself. The secondary meaning of Piers's surname is only one indication that the texts of *Piers Plowman* draw upon those ancient English models.

In this essay I will focus on the implications of my claim for passus 19 of *Piers Plowman* B version. My reading will demonstrate that even though passus 19 uses the religious imagery of an apocalyptic vision, its primary topic is the relatively secular question of just taxation. Piers is not only a good man who drives a plow, in a symbolic evocation of the Gospel's agrarian imagery; he is also a good man who governs a *plouȝ*, acting in the roles of procurator, reeve, registrar, and purveyor to make sure that all men obey the injunction *redde quod debes* ("pay what you owe"). This is not to say, however, that the religious imagery and themes of the passus are of secondary importance to the political themes. Rather, the apocalyptic and religious language of the passus plays a crucial role in authorizing the poem's historically based satire of bureaucratic excess. As I will argue, Piers's quasi-priestly status is itself a memorial of early English law, reflecting the fact that it was recorded almost exclusively by servants of ecclesiastical institutions who made no great effort to distinguish their bureaucratic and priestly clericalisms. In *Piers Plowman*, the combined legal-homiletic mode of Anglo-Saxon law is viewed nostalgically, because it seemed to reflect a mode of governance untroubled by those abuses that had arisen out of the later-medieval reliance on bureaucratic form as the primary guarantor of legality.⁴ In my reading, then, the fusion of religious allegory and political satire in passus 19 performs the poem's own resistance to the sophistry of fourteenth-century recordkeeping, as the poem rejects the formalistic methods whereby its contemporary records created the impression of clarity and transparency, in favor of the more archaic and homiletic formalisms that aimed rather to convince the reader of the moral rectitude of the transacting parties.

As we shall see, the paradoxical significance of the English legal tradition evoked by the name "plowman" forces Piers to embody a contradiction. On one hand, Piers presents an idealized alternative to those fourteenth-century administrators who exploited the bureaucracies of church and royal household for their own selfish ends, and whose exploitations were often characterized pejoratively as innovations abandoning the traditions of their ancestors. On the other hand, the notion of the law that Piers represents was itself a

4. For a fuller discussion of the interrelationship between law and homily in the Anglo-Saxon period and the afterlife of legal-homiletic discourse in later medieval England, see my forthcoming book *From Plowmen to Lawmen: Anglo-Saxon Legal Tradition and the School of Langland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).

nostalgic construct created by those very administrators, who indeed sometimes disguised their innovations by claiming they originated in “time out of mind”—a claim difficult to disprove for the very reason that time out of mind is by definition imperfectly recorded. Hence a great deal of the *Piers Plowman* tradition’s difficulty can be traced back to the irony that its titular authority, Piers the Plowman, derives his symbolic resonance from one of the very models of ancient justice employed by late-medieval institutions to bring about the kinds of procedural innovations that the poem *Piers Plowman* criticizes at such length.

More generally, the plowman becomes such a charged and ambiguous figure in the later medieval period because he personifies the anxiety described by Richard Green in *A Crisis of Truth*, concerning “the dislocation caused by a powerful centralized authority employing a highly literate bureaucracy to enforce a common law still profoundly local and oral in its structural assumptions.”⁵ It is important to remember that despite appearances, the local and oral structural assumptions of common law (and the earliest English records of its practice) were not always contrary to the ends of centralized authority. Indeed, the dislocation described by Green actually drove the evolution of late-medieval legal institutions, as the very adaptability of oral structural assumptions to different contexts gave government room to innovate without appearing to abandon long-standing precedent. As I will describe below, many of the most enigmatic aspects of the figure of Piers the Plowman can be better accounted for if the figure is considered in light of this dynamic.

The Plowman and the Plowland

The figure of the plowman is first associated with archaic law in *Piers Plowman* B version in an oft-cited passage from the prologue:

The kyng and knyghthod and clergie bothe
 Casten þat þe commune sholde hire communes fynde.
 The commune contrevd of kynde wit craftes,
 And for profit of al þe peple Plowmen ordeyned
 To tilie and to travaille as trewe lif asketh.
 The kyng and þe commune and kynde wit þe þridde
 Shopen lawe and leute, ech lif to knowe his owene. (Prol.116–22)

5. Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 124. See also Stephen Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 102–39.

This passage begins with the assertion that the king, the knighthood, and the clergy all judge (*casten*) that the common people should find their “commons” or sustenance. The commons, meanwhile, devised (*contreved*) on the basis of natural wisdom (*kynde wit*) to “ordain” plowmen to till and to work, “as trewe lif asketh,” for the profit of all. And so in this manner the king, the commons, and natural wisdom together shaped “lawe and leute,” for “ech lif to knowe his owene,” which is to say that they devised laws ensuring that each individual can recognize his own property. In this narrative of legal history, then, the intention of the nobility and clergy to provide for the commons combined with the practices of wealth production intuited by the plowmen to provide the form and content respectively necessary to codify the law, which enshrined mechanisms for the peaceful distribution of that wealth.

Historically this passage has been read as an original statement by Langland about his basic political philosophy, though there has been much disagreement about the specifics of that philosophy.⁶ In fact, however, it is a relatively formulaic summary of English legal history, of a kind that was frequently encoded in English legal documents themselves.⁷ The passage participates in the narrative conventions of a law code’s prologue, wherein a king calls together the knights and clergy (in Old English referred to collectively as the *witan* or “wise men”) so that they may all together draft a description of current legal practice for the benefit of the people. Compare, for example, the opening lines of the *Quadripartitus* translation of the law code *I Cnut*: “Hæc sunt instituta Cnudi regis Anglorum, Danorum, Norwegarum uenerando sapientum eius consilio ad laudem et gloriam Dei et suam regalitatem et commune commodum habita in sancto natali Domini apud Wintoniam” (*These are the laws of Cnut king of the English, Danes, and Norwegians—according to the counsel of his wise men—that will honor the praise and glory of God and his royalty and the common profit, having come to pass in the holy time of the Lord’s birth in the vicinity of Winchester*).⁸ This passage similarly describes a king surrounded by *sapientum* (translating OE *witan*), selected from both the nobility and the clergy, who consider wise counsel in order to provide for the common good.

6. See, for example, the readings of the passage by Scanlon and Crane: Larry Scanlon, “King, Commons, and Kind Wit: Langland’s National Vision,” in *Imagining a Medieval English Nation*, ed. Kathy Lavezzo (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 191–223, pp. 204–12; Susan Crane, “Writing Lesson of 1381,” in *Chaucer’s England: Literature in Historical Context*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 201–21, pp. 211–13.

7. On this passage’s connection to Richard II’s coronation oath, see J. A. W. Bennett, “The Date of the B-Text of *Piers Plowman*,” *Medium Ævum* 12 (1943): 55–64.

8. *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, vol. 1, ed. Felix Liebermann (Halle: Neimeyer, 1903), p. 278.

The difference between Cnut's law code and the B prologue is that in the latter text, the king and his *witan* are explicitly said to contribute only by codifying principles that the commons had already intuited, and that the "plowmen" had already put into practice. Though certainly this idea may have had some radical potential in the years surrounding 1381, the fact remains that the B prologue narrative is hardly a radical departure from the standard definition of English common law as a *lex non scripta* or "unwritten law." Laws have to come from somewhere, and if they did not originate as a written code on the Roman model, then they must have come from local traditional practices. Such a formulation of legal history detracted nothing from the power of the king and his knights in the present; wherever English legal practices may have originated, we are now only able to access the ancient traditions by means of the records kept by the authorities.

The history of the English word "plow" suggests that it is no accident that "plowmen" should stand in as the originators of English traditional law in the B prologue's summary of English legal history. The "plow-land" meaning of *plouȝ* has particular philological importance despite its comparative rarity in Middle English, because it happens to be the meaning of the term in every single Old English occurrence of the Norse loan word *plog*.⁹ The association between the "plow-land" definition of Middle English *plouȝ* and popular notions of tenurial rights is suggested by the appearances of *plouȝ* in Middle English poetry. Even though the "plow-land" unit was an archaism, the word is attested in several Middle English poems, often in an alliterative doublet with *park* that tends to appear as shorthand for wealth derived from tenurial rights.¹⁰ Alliterative doublets from Anglo-Saxon law survive quite well in later English, as the formulaic phrases "have and hold" and "sake and soke" exemplify. The *park/plouȝ* doublet may even derive from one of the few surviving occurrences of *plog* in the corpus of Old English, in the alliterative doublet *ne plot ne plog*, found in a formulaic oath for accepting a bequest.¹¹ Indeed, the alliteration in the name (and poem) "Piers Plowman" may itself have marked the name as an allusion to the sound-based mnemonics of folk wisdom and traditional law within which the *park/plouȝ* formula operated.

9. Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, s.v. "plóg," <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/025289> (accessed June 1, 2012).

10. For example, in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* at book 1, lines 1566 and book 5, lines 2524 and 2849. John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. Russell A. Peck, 3 vols. (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute, 2000–2006). See also Yeager, *From Plowmen*, chap. 5, and the quotations in *MED*, s.v. "plouȝ," def. 3, cited above.

11. *Hit Becwæð*, in *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, vol. 1, p. 400. For one list of alliterative doublets common in Middle English law, see Alicia Rodríguez-Alvarez, "Oral Features in Late Middle English Legal Texts," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 107.2 (2006): 187–97, pp. 189–90.

The earliest occurrence of the Middle English term *plou3-lond* cited by the *MED* appears in a description of Domesday Book in Robert of Gloucester's thirteenth-century metrical chronicle:

Pe king willam, uorto wite þe wurp of is londe,
 Let enqueri streitliche þoru al engelonde
 Hou moni plou lond & hou moni hiden al so
 Were in euerich ssire & wat hii were werp þer to (7674–7).¹²

As Robert makes clear in this quotation, Domesday's "plou lond" (*carucata* in Latin) is an equivalent to the hide, assessed by William for the purpose of knowing the "worth" of his land. The carucate unit is particularly associated with Domesday's sixth circuit, assessing Yorkshire and the Danelaw, and the Anglo-Saxon documents that use the *plog* unit in their boundary clauses are both dated to the eleventh century and found in York Minster. Hence the word appears to be a relatively late arrival to England, brought by Scandinavian migrants who divided up their new territory into the units to which they were accustomed.¹³

Hides and plowlands existed long before the Domesday inquest, which followed established precedent to count these units for tax purposes. In 1012, for example, Athelred the Unready required every hide of land to pay 12 pence to their local reeves, and this money was then used in turn to pay the ransom of the Danish invader Thorkell.¹⁴ These national taxes, later called "Danegeld" in honor of their original beneficiaries, were levied by the post-Conquest kings of England with reference to Domesday's assessments until the practice fell off after the reign of Henry II.¹⁵ Hence implicit in the name "Piers Plow-

12. "The King William, so he may know the worth of his land, / let the question be asked directly through all England / of how many plowlands and also how many hides / were in every Shire, and what they were worth." *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. W. A. Wright (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887).

13. A. J. Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), p. 331. The charters containing *plog* are cataloged by Sawyer S 968 and S 1461a: "Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus," ed. Antoinette Di Paolo Healey with John Price Wilkin and Xin Xiang, <http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doecorpus/> (accessed May 31, 2012); *The Electronic Sawyer*, ed. Simon Keynes et al., <http://www.esawyer.org.uk/browse/sawno.html> (accessed May 31, 2012). For the classic description of hides, carucates, and ploughlands, see Maitland, *Domesday and Beyond* (London, 1960), esp. pp. 357–520; more recently, see David Roffe, *Domesday: The Inquest and the Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and *Decoding Domesday* (Oxford: Boydell and Brewer, 2007).

14. Simon Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred "The Unready" (978–1016)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 221. See also M. K. Lawson, "The Collection of Danegeld and Heregeld in the Reigns of Æthelred and Cnut," *English Historical Review* 99 (1984): 721–38.

15. For a medieval definition of "Danegeld" see *Leges Henrici Primi*, ed. L. J. Downer (Ox-

man” is the idea that Piers knows where his traditional plowland is, what its boundaries are, who originally owned it, and how those owners used to pay their taxes. Such is precisely the kind of knowledge attributed to plowmen in the B prologue, when it is said that they were ordained by the commons to work for the profit of the people in accordance with natural wisdom.

This historical legal knowledge came to play an important role in land disputes of the fourteenth century, as pre-Conquest precedent was evoked in order to unravel the manorial system. It is no coincidence that Chaucer’s Man of Law, who was “so greet a purchasour” that “al was fee symple to hym in effect,” also knew “caas and doomes alle / that from the tyme of kyng William were falle” (I.318–19, 322–23).¹⁶ By the age of Langland, Domesday was cited in legal disputes primarily to prove “ancient demesne” (*antiquum dominicum*), by demonstrating that in the time of William the Conqueror the land belonged to the king.¹⁷ Such claims would have helped the Man of Law to treat land as “fee simple,” because it provided a basis for invalidating the customary terms of tenure that might impede a transfer of land based on an exchange of money rather than lines of descent. The advantage of Domesday in this regard is that it frames such maneuvering not as an abandonment of precedent, but as a return to even earlier precedent.

Because ancient demesne played this simplifying role in late-medieval legal proceedings, Domesday Book appears to have been understood in the popular consciousness as a law that defended the weak from exploitation by their betters. Domesday Book is certainly implicated in the “great rumour” of 1377, when villeins and manorial tenants withdrew their customs and services *en masse*,¹⁸ and it is perhaps evoked in Wat Tyler’s demand that the so-called law of Winchester be instituted.¹⁹ As Anthony Musson summarizes: “we can say that [Domesday Book] was quasi-law in the minds of many judges, and

ford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 15.1 (pp. 120–21). See also J. A. Green, “The Last Century of Danegeld,” *English Historical Review* 96 (1981): 241–58, p. 242. An important firsthand account of Domesday’s reception in the twelfth century is Richard of Ely’s *Dialogue on the Exchequer*: *Richard Fitz Nigel, Dialogus de Scaccario*, ed. and trans. Charles Johnson (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1950), pp. 61–64.

16. Geoffrey Chaucer, “General Prologue,” in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), quoted by fragment and line number.

17. Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), p. 34.

18. Rosamund Faith, “The ‘Great Rumour’ of 1377 and Peasant Ideology,” in *English Rising of 1381*, ed. R. H. Hilton and T. H. Aston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 43–73.

19. Anthony Musson, *Medieval Law in Context: The Growth of Legal Consciousness from Magna Carta to the Peasant’s Revolt* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 252. See also Green, *Crisis of Truth*, pp. 201–2, 412.

in the minds of many peasants the *only* law.”²⁰ Hence the coincidence that Domesday should appear to play the same reformist role for Tyler that “Peres the Ploughman” would play in John Ball’s letter, even as it also records the preliterate practices of estate management attributed to the work of “plowmen” in the B prologue, suggests that the plowman figure drew at least some of his symbolic resonance from popular understandings of William’s survey of England’s hides and plowlands.²¹ And so the ambivalence about literacy and education manifest in the figure of Piers in fact reflects the impact on his symbolic function of the fundamental irony of Domesday’s reception history, that a text famous today as an innovative step toward the creation of literate bureaucracy served in the later medieval period as a textual trace of local, oral practices, even though (as more than one scholar has pointed out) the text is highly problematic as a record of actual pre-Conquest precedent.²²

I would postulate further that the plowmen ordained in the B prologue evoke not only the precedent of Domesday, but the entire surviving record of early English law. Domesday Book is only one of the legal records from pre-1189 “time out of mind” exploited by fourteenth-century concerns to maintain or even invent freedoms for themselves. Indeed, recent scholarship has concluded that monasteries had used their earliest charters in this way since the Anglo-Saxon period itself.²³ Other institutions took note of monastic success and copied their methods; for example the so-called London Collection of Anglo-Saxon laws and documents produced by the city’s chamberlain Andrew Horn in the early fourteenth century was compiled with the probable goal of acquiring a favorable charter for the city from Edward II.²⁴ Not only

20. Musson, *Medieval Law*, p. 252.

21. On Ball’s letters and Piers Plowman, see Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, pp. 102–39; Jessie Gellrich, *Discourse and Dominion in the Fourteenth Century: Oral Contexts of Writing in Philosophy, Poetics, and Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 151–91; Crane, “Writing Lesson,” pp. 201–11; Ann Astell, *Political Allegory in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 44–72; and Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Late Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 173. For the text of the letters themselves see Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, pp. 13–15.

22. See, for example, Wormald’s argument about the “ancient” exemption of Oswaldslaw, first appearing in Domesday Book: Patrick Wormald, “Lordship and Justice in the Early English Kingdom: Oswaldslaw Revisited,” in his *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West: Law as Text, Image and Experience* (London: Hambledon, 1999), pp. 313–32.

23. See, for example, Julia Crick’s work on document storage and use at St. Albans: “Liberty and Fraternity: Creating and Defending the Liberty of St Albans,” in *Expectations of the Law in the Middle Ages*, ed. Anthony Musson (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2001), pp. 91–103, and “*Pristina libertas*: Liberty and the Anglo-Saxons Revisited,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6.14 (2004): 47–71. See also her *Charters of St. Albans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

24. Jeremy Catto, “Andrew Horn: Law and History in Fourteenth-Century England,” in

Domesday but more generally the charters and chronicles of the Anglo-Saxon era were contested ground throughout the later medieval period, capable of providing a basis for widely divergent political claims. Indeed, the fact that both Wat Tyler's uprising and Thomas Walsingham's monastery saw their ideals reflected in the quasi-legal precedent of the Anglo-Saxon past reveals just how broadly adaptable that precedent was. Hence while the "plow-land" unit was strictly speaking an anachronism in the fourteenth century, the discourse within which that anachronism survived was occupied with the same questions regarding the roles of secular lords, ecclesiastical institutions, and the educated bureaucrats working for both that are considered and reconsidered in varying permutations throughout the versions of *Piers Plowman*. The poem may be summarized as a series of attempts to reimagine the original administrative practices of the "plowmen" ordained by the commons, and in so doing to undermine the authority of those corrupt institutions that based their authority in historical claims about precisely those practices.

As I will demonstrate in the next section, the usefulness of Anglo-Saxon legal documents and law texts to fourteenth-century concerns was predicated on the very informality that consigned those documents and texts to the status of "quasi-law." The ambiguity of Anglo-Saxon legal documents allowed for exercises of judicial discretion to represent themselves not as deviations from standard practice but, on the contrary, as returns to the precedent of earlier eras. Legal documents in *Piers Plowman*, and in particular the pardons given to the title character in passus 7 and 19, formally evoke the conventions of Anglo-Saxon diplomatic to authorize a similar gesture.

The Plowman as a Preacher

In his important study of Piers's occupation and its symbolic significance, "The Plowshare of the Tongue," Stephen Barney posits that the surname Plowman represents "an outgrowth of the symbol of plowman as preacher in medieval letters."²⁵ As Barney points out in his article, the figure of the plowman

Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Richard William Southern, ed. R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), pp. 367–91; Bruce O'Brien, *God's Peace and King's Peace: The Laws of Edward the Confessor* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 122, 257; and Ralph Hanna, *London Literature 1300–1380* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 44–103. For the later history of this compilation, see Kathleen Kennedy's essay in this volume.

25. Stephen A. Barney, "The Plowshare of the Tongue: The Progress of a Symbol from the Bible to *Piers Plowman*," *Medieval Studies* 35 (1973): 261–93, pp. 277–78. See also D. W. Robertson Jr. and Bernard F. Huppé, *"Piers Plowman" and Scriptural Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 149; and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton's analysis of the arator

fits well with the agricultural imagery running throughout the Old and New Testaments. The God of the Bible is a planter, the soul is a field or garden, and agriculture is a form of penance.²⁶ Such imagery is clearly resonant in the figure of Piers the Plowman and his activities in the versions of *Piers Plowman*. My argument will build on Barney's work to demonstrate the ways in which the particular model of ideal priesthood represented by Piers is mediated by the homiletic conventions of early English legal documents.

As I have written elsewhere, Anglo-Saxon charters are not easily distinguished from Anglo-Saxon homilies on formal grounds. They even appear to have been performed in liturgical contexts.²⁷ This is hardly surprising, given that the church may well have dominated the production and storage of legal documents for the entire duration of the Anglo-Saxon period.²⁸ A relevant illustration of this aspect of Anglo-Saxon documentary culture is the charter cataloged as "S 968" by Peter Sawyer in his 1968 volume *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography*. This charter is a relatively conventional late Anglo-Saxon charter that also happens to witness in its vernacular boundary clause the Old English word *plogaland*.²⁹ S 968 commemorates a gift by the Danish king and conqueror Cnut to the archbishop Ælfric of York, in the year 1033. Because of the document's similarity to other York charters, Simon Keynes has argued that the document was probably drafted by the archbishop himself or by his assistants.³⁰ Further, the charter and its Old English boundary clause survives in both thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Yorkshire legal manuscripts, and hence it exemplifies the continued interest of ecclesiastical institutions in maintaining into the age of Langland not only Anglo-Saxon documents themselves but also, by extension, Anglo-Saxon notions of what legal documents were and what they were for.³¹

from Bridget of Sweden, who indeed presents a striking parallel: *Reformist Apocalypticism and "Piers Plowman"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 108. For a more historical study of the "plowman" figure, see Christopher Dyer, "Piers Plowman and Plowmen: A Historical Perspective," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 8 (1994): 155–76.

26. Barney, "Plowshare," pp. 263–64.

27. Stephen M. Yeager, "Document, Poetry, and Editorial Practice: The Case of 'St. Egwine,'" in *Rethinking the South English Legendaries*, ed. Heather Blurton and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 168–86, p. 173.

28. For a recent summary of the debates around the church's role in Anglo-Saxon record-keeping, see Scott T. Smith, *Land and Book: Literature and Land Tenure in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 22–28.

29. *The Electronic Sawyer*, <http://www.esawyer.org.uk/charter/968.html> (accessed April 20, 2012).

30. Simon Keynes, "Cnut's Earls," in *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark and Norway*, ed. Alexander Rumble (London: Leicester University Press, 1994), 43–88, p. 51.

31. These manuscripts are volumes 1 and 2 of York's *Magnum registorum album* (c. xiv) and London, British Library MS Cotton Claudius B.iii (c. xiii): *Electronic Sawyer*.

A summary of the charter will make the homiletic character of the document clear. The charter begins by pointing out that Cnut's gift is made in the name of the living God and true Lord Jesus Christ, redeemer of the world.³² Cnut holds his title king of all the English "having been appointed with the indulgence of omnipotent God" (*omnipotentis dei disponente clementia*). He is mindful of how the heavenly ruler governs and protects gravely and with firm reason, as is known to all wise men. He also knows that while some are exalted by the divine will, some others are cast away by chance, "like the straw blown by the wind" (*sicut stipulam ventu raptam*, quoting Is. 41:2). With this in mind, Cnut bestows 43 hides or "cassati" of land at Patrington to the archbishop Ælfric and his successors. After a brief enumeration of the various terms of the agreement, Cnut then states that any parties who violate the liberty of the archbishop granted by the document shall hear a voice saying "depart from me, cursed ones, into the eternal fire" (*Discedite a me maledicti in ignem aeternum*, quoting Matt. 25:41); then they will cruelly suffer in iron stoves (*ferreis sartaginibus*) among devils, unless they atone before death. The document then proceeds to the Old English clause that both marks the boundaries of the territory and enumerates the *plogaland* units in question. The document then concludes with the signatures of the dukes and bishops who witnessed the transaction.

As should be clear, then, the text of S 968 is greatly concerned with the assertion of religious principle about God's power and the transience of worldly wealth. These principles have little to do with the terms of ownership that the document is ostensibly written to enumerate, but authorize it nonetheless by explaining the motive behind the transaction. Hence it seems the document aims to establish the moral authority of the parties involved, by demonstrating their knowledge of widely accepted religious truths. Nor are the terms used to assert these truths merely formulaic. Of course S 968 hardly deviates from Anglo-Saxon conventional wisdom in observing that God is the source of earthly power, but nevertheless the charter's exact phrasing of this idea does not appear elsewhere among surviving Anglo-Saxon documents. In this sense the charter resembles a literary composition as much as it resembles a legal document, at least according to the standards of later generations.

Another crucial aspect of the charter for the present purposes is its heavy reliance upon divine sanction to enforce the documented transaction. Religious anathema in documentary contexts are a European phenomenon, but they appear to be more common in Anglo-Saxon than in continental charters of the same period.³³ These aspects of S 968 were quite antiquated by the

32. This paraphrase is based on the uncorrected text available on the *Electronic Sawyer* website.

33. Pierre Chaplais, "Some Early Anglo-Saxon Charters," in *Prisca Munimenta: Studies in*

fourteenth century. Even in the Angevin era, English legal documents were already much more predictably formulaic in structure and much more specific in describing the penalties for violating the agreement than is characteristic of Anglo-Saxon documents. As the authoritative voice of the document evolved from the voice of a preacher at the pulpit to the voice of a trained bureaucrat, so also did the documents abandon their reliance on religious precedent in favor of legal precedent as a template for deterring would-be criminals.

And so it is significant that the most floridly homiletic Anglo-Saxon charters are the later ones, and even those are relatively restrained when they are compared with post-Conquest forgeries.³⁴ It appears that the homiletic sententiousness of Anglo-Saxon charters was recognizable not only to modern historians but also to medieval bureaucrats, who apparently saw this rhetoric as crucial for establishing the documents' legitimacy. Paradoxically, the very fact that Cnut made so little effort to clearly define the terms of his endowment in this document is part of the reason that critics of the document accept even today that the endowment actually took place. As a rule, eleventh-century charters do not define such terms; hence if S 968 enumerated them in accordance with the expectations of later periods, this in itself would be a reason to believe the document was a forgery. For an Anglo-Saxon charter to appear legitimate in the late-medieval period, then, it must eschew the legitimizing formulae of late-medieval documents as ostentatiously as possible, in favor of ornate but conventional religious rhetoric. It is no wonder, then, that the 1381 revolutionaries sought these documents in the monastic archives as a source of legitimacy: their very existence exposes the novelty of bureaucratic professionalism itself, and as such they provide a model for alternative and for that reason unorthodox methods for assessing legal and political claims. The figure of the plowman, who combines the features of an ideal preacher with the memory of ancient English law, provides a template for imagining such alternatives.

This Anglo-Saxon charter's apparent rejection of the formulaic procedures of professional bureaucrats in favor of homiletic assertions of moral principle provides a context for evaluating Piers's two "pardons" of passus 7 (111–18) and 19 (187), which both eschew the formal expectations of indulgences along similar lines. The text of these pardons has long been an item of concern for

Archival and Administrative History Presented to A. E. J. Hollaender, ed. F. Ranger (London: University of London Press, 1973), p. 712. On liturgical and documentary curses in England and France before the thirteenth century, see Lester K. Little, *Benedictine Maledictions: Liturgical Cursing in Romanesque France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

34. Sarah Foot, "Reading Anglo-Saxon Charters: Memory, Record, or Story?" in *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Elizabeth M. Tyler and Ross Balzaretti (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 39–65, p. 56.

critics attempting to fit the documents within a coherent allegorical framework.³⁵ The pardons' respective statements that "he who does well will go to eternal life and he who does poorly will go to eternal fire" and that "you should pay back what you owe" are presented to Piers in confirmation of his duty to administer units of land, in that sense serving a function analogous to charters like S 968. And yet the documents offer even less in the way of procedural detail than we see in Cnut's charter.

But even though the pardons are brief and aphoristic, nonetheless there are discernible parallels between their texts and the text of Cnut's charter. The quotation from the Athanasian Creed in the pardon in passus 7 echoes the same chapter of Matthew quoted in the sanction clause of Cnut's charter.³⁶ The sentiment of the second pardon, meanwhile, phrases much more concisely the same idea expressed at such length in the homiletic portions of S 968, namely that all things come from God and therefore one should give things back to His servants. Hence the pardons' forcefully religious but procedurally ambiguous rhetoric has a clear precedent in the vague, sententious legal documents of the Anglo-Saxon era. Again, the fact that both of these pardons are given to Piers the "plow-man" strongly suggests that Piers's symbolism is derived in part from a construct of ideal English law based in the criticism of Anglo-Saxon legal documents and the affiliated traditional memories of Anglo-Saxon "folk law," as constructed in the fourteenth century. In the next section I will turn to the second of these two charters, to illustrate the implications of my argument for the passus in which it appears.

The Pardon and the Plow in Passus 19

For the remainder of this essay I will look closely at the second of Piers's two pardons in the context of its appearance in passus 19. I will argue that the allegory of this passus, heavily eschatological though it may seem, employs its eschatology to address the same mundane concerns of the poem's earliest

35. See, for example, Alastair Minnis, "Piers' Protean Pardon: The Letter and Spirit of Langland's Theology of Indulgences," in *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Anne D'Arcy (Dublin: Four Courts, 2005), pp. 234–36.

36. John A. Alford, *Piers Plowman: A Guide to the Quotations* (Tempe, Arizona: MRTS, 1992), pp. 56–57. Anglo-Saxon charters with sanction clauses quoting Matthew 25 include S 33, S 392, S 445, S 461, S 480, S 485, S 491, S 502, S 534, S 554, S 558, S 587, S 588, S 610, S 654, S 687, S 705, S 842, S 851, S 875, S 882, S 886, S 896, S 955, S 1378: *Electronic Sawyer* (accessed November 21, 2012). For another echo of a sanction clause in *Piers Plowman*, see Stephen Yeager, "Lollardy in *Mum and the Sothsegger*: A Reconsideration," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 25 (2011): 161–90, pp. 181–83.

passus. If Piers in passus 19 symbolizes theological constructs like Jesus's human nature³⁷ or an ideal pope,³⁸ he also personifies a secular notion of idealized clerical competence, whose association with the figure of Conscience perhaps anticipates our modern ideal of "conscientiousness" in our public servants.³⁹ The eschatological imagery of this passus draws upon the homiletic forms of early English legal documents to employ religious iconography as a way of containing the disruptive potential of the plowman figure.

Passus 19 is the middle of the three final visions of the B version, and it begins with Will in a church. At the moment that the men around Will get up to give their offerings, Will falls asleep and dreams about Christ, who appears somewhat puzzlingly in the guise of Piers the Plowman. This start to the passus signifies the relatively secular focus of the allegory that is to follow: it is highly significant that the dreamer falls asleep at the moment of the offering. As we shall see, Christ in the guise of Piers the Plowman is Christ the tax collector, who will use the offerings due from his congregation to fund the performance of the sacraments that will lead to their salvation.

This theme first becomes apparent in the long speech by Conscience that follows Christ's appearance in the form of Piers. Conscience explains the difference between the two names Jesus and Christ as a division between his two functions as king and conqueror. As Barney observes, the "point" of the king/conqueror distinction "is not to define Jesus by these titles, but rather to define these offices by their ideal in Jesus."⁴⁰ J. A. Burrow has rightly observed that Conscience clearly represents the roles of king and conqueror as being conceptually quite distinct, though the two roles are clearly defined in relation to each other.⁴¹ Conscience's speech about Christ ends with the spirit of the Paraclete descending on Piers and his compatriots, and afterwards the spirit of Grace travels throughout the world and gives everyone skills. Grace

37. Malcolm Godden, *The Making of "Piers Plowman"* (London: Longman, 1990), p. 75.

38. James Simpson, *Piers Plowman: Introduction to the B-Text* (London: Longman, 1990), p. 222.

39. On Conscience, see most recently Sarah Wood, *Conscience and the Composition of "Piers Plowman"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

40. Stephen Barney, *The Penn Commentary on "Piers Plowman,"* vol. 5 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 110. On the representation of kingship in these lines see also Wood, *Conscience*, pp. 82–86.

41. J. A. Burrow, "Conscience on Knights, Kings, and Conquerors: *Piers Plowman* B.19.26–198," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 23 (2009): 85–95, p. 89. My own reading differs from Burrow's, in that I read Conscience's description of Christ's roles in the passage as a bipartite rather than tripartite scheme. While the words "kyng" and "conqueror" appear fifteen and nine times respectively in the lines cited by Burrow in the title of his article, the word "knyght" appears only in lines 27–29, in a brief introductory passage framing the discussion to follow in relation to the description of Christ as a knight in passus 18: Wittig, *Concordance*.

dispenses gifts that are (as James Simpson summarizes) “clerical, commercial, manual, martial,” and only then “contemplative,” and that thus appear to be more pragmatic than spiritual in nature.⁴² Grace then appoints Conscience as king, and she assigns Piers to four clerkly posts, discussed in more detail below. Piers then puts together a plowteam of scripture, sows the four seeds of the cardinal virtues in an apparent allusion to the parable of the sower, and keeps the resulting grain in a barn named “Unite” or “Holy Church.” The characterization of Holy Church as a storehouse is highly unusual, but fits with the theme of taxation and dissemination of goods: the Church pools everyone’s resources together and distributes them among the congregation according to need.

When the barn is built, Piers disappears from the B version for the last time. The disappearance of Piers from the poem at almost the exact instant his duties have been enumerated reflects his status as a mythic point of origin, rather than a viable and coherent alternative to the slow creep of bureaucratic complexity. Immediately after this disappearance the barn is attacked by Pride and subsequently fortified. The passus concludes with speeches by four characters—a brewer who wishes to keep his worldly goods for himself, a vicar who laments the greed of church officials, and a lord and a king who both justify their abuses of power. All four of these figures either personify or speak to the perversion of the cardinal virtues by the people of Will’s present day. Thus the apparent vision of secular perfection with which we began, Christ the king and conqueror, is undercut at the end by a “disintegration of meaning” into “pure sophistry” that begins almost immediately after Piers’s final disappearance from the poem.⁴³

Most readings of this passus identify it as only one of many instances where the poet strains against the insufficiency of religious allegory to account for the vagaries of lived experience.⁴⁴ And yet part of the reason that religious allegory has been found wanting here is that, despite the passus’s confessional language and symbolism, its concerns are not particularly theological, but

42. Simpson, *Piers*, p. 223.

43. Mary Carruthers, *The Search for St. Truth: A Study of Meaning in “Piers Plowman”* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 158.

44. Priscilla Jenkins, “Conscience: The Frustration of Allegory,” in *Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches* (London: Methuen, 1969), 125–43, esp. pp. 136–38; Carruthers, *Search*, pp. 149–60; Godden, *Making*, pp. 156–62; J. A. Burrow, *Langland’s Fictions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), pp. 76–80; Kathleen Hewett-Smith, “‘Nede Ne Hath No Lawe’: Poverty and the De-stabilization of Allegory in the Final Visions of *Piers Plowman*,” in *William Langland’s “Piers Plowman”: A Book of Essays*, ed. Hewett-Smith (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 233–53; William Rogers, *Interpretation in “Piers Plowman”* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), pp. 266–75; Scanlon, “King, Commons,” p. 203.

rather “clerical” in its modern sense: which is to say, the passus is highly concerned with administrative transparency. For example, Pride’s threats to Holy Church are phrased in decidedly “clerical” terms:

. . . youre carte þe bileeue
 Shal be coloured so queyntely and couered vnder [oure] Sophistrie
 That Conscience shal noȝt knowe who is cristene or heþene,
 Ne no manere marchaunt þat wiþ moneye deleþ
 Wheiþer he wynne wiþ right, wiþ wrong or wiþ vsure. (19.346–50)

Pride’s threats here are directed at the Church’s bookkeeping practices. Pride says that the *carte* or “charter” of doctrine will be so colored with sophistry that Conscience will not know Christians from heathens, and by the same token merchants will not know if they are making money licitly, illicitly, or with usury. Hence while it is clearly implied that Pride will increase the number of abuses carried out in the name of the church, he does not explicitly threaten to bring in such abuses but simply to ensure that they are no longer recognizable as such.

Ecclesiastical abuses are connected to the crime of usury throughout the versions of *Piers Plowman*, and the passage here is most clearly paralleled in this regard in C-version passus 4 (193–94) when stereotyped usurers the Jews and the Lombards are lumped together with merchants and mitred bishops as the enemies of Conscience. The basis of the analogy is the ill use these figures make of documentary recordkeeping. Usurers and corrupt clerics both take more than they are owed, and they are able to do so because of their privileged positions as bookkeepers. This theme is reinforced shortly thereafter, when Conscience orders all Christians to build a moat of contrition around the barn, and the only Christians who do not repent (besides the prostitutes) are “a sisour and a somonour þat were forsworen ofte” (19.369)—perjurers, in other words, whose crimes have implications for the perceived fairness and trustworthiness of both secular and religious legal institutions, and who therefore do harm to “Unite” analogous to the harm that Pride would do if he were given access to the books of church doctrine.

Hence, even though an assault on Holy Church by Pride at first seems to have all the trappings of *psychomachia*, in substance it is as if the barn Holy Church were the U.S. economy circa 2007, and Pride were threatening to invest its grain in mortgage-backed securities.⁴⁵ The survival of the Christian

45. For a description of the Church’s decline in economic terms that overlaps considerably with my reading of this scene’s allegory, see Nancy Clegg and Clyde Reed, “The Economic Decline of the Church in Medieval England,” *Explorations in Economic History* 31 (1994): 261–80.

community may be at stake, but at issue is a rather prescient description of the dangers inherent in pridefully treating the mere growth of an institution's complexity as if this were by itself a sign of improvement, when in fact complexity tends to eliminate transparency and undermine faith in institutions, thusly precipitating crises in confidence.

As I have stated above, the particular topic of this passus is the rational justification for taxation, with Piers in the role of the ideal manager of public funds. Hence Piers has four clerical roles in addition to his duties as plowman. Piers the procurator has the authority to act as Grace's representative; Piers the reeve collects rent from the recipients of Grace's gifts; Piers the registrar makes a note of it; and Piers the purveyor spends the money to procure food and other goods on behalf of the institution he serves.⁴⁶ Thus the injunction in Grace's pardon, *redde quod debes*, is represented here in consistently material terms.⁴⁷ From what we can tell, it appears that the Christian community "owes" Piers and Grace not only their contrition and good works but also the actual money they have earned from their labors, to be spent for the common good. Pride threatens to complicate and disrupt precisely this redistribution of revenue, and the descriptions of venality that conclude the passus are similarly focused on abuses connected to taxation and expenditure of public wealth, offering specific negative examples to underscore the principles articulated in the passus's opening sections.

Perhaps the most striking evidence for the relatively procedural concerns of this passus appears near its beginning, in the distinction made between Jesus the king and Christ the conqueror in Conscience's speech. Conscience's treatment of this clearly homiletic theme draws upon the secular distinction between the "ancien ley" of common law and the "novel ley" of statutes in the English legal system. The offices are figured by Conscience in terms of the savior's relationship to written biblical tradition. The Jewishness of Jesus the king is emphasized for example in lines 137–39: "No man so worthy / to be kaiser or kyng of the kingdom of Juda, / Ne over Jewes justice, as Jesus was." Christ the conqueror, meanwhile, has the "special grace" that allowed him "to make lordes of laddes, of lond that he wynneth, / and fre men foule thralles, that folwen noght hise lawes" (19.32–33). Thus we can say that Jesus the King of the Jews preserved and continued the Judaic tradition of the old law, whereas Jesus the conqueror upset precedent and established a new law,

46. For definitions of these terms, see John Alford, *Piers Plowman: A Glossary of Legal Diction* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988).

47. For a complementary reading of *redde quod debes* in material terms, see Michael Van Dussen, "Parsing the Peacock: Langland's Wills and the Limits of *Voluntas*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 25 (2011): 77–94, pp. 90–91.

enslaving the powerful and promoting the poor. In the process, he disinherited those Jews who failed to recognize Christ as the messiah—an implication of Christ's death also expounded upon in passus 18 (103–9).⁴⁸ Jesus the king upholds the ancestral common law witnessed in the Old Testament, but at the same time Christ the conqueror has the prerogative to introduce new statutes if the situation demands.

Conscience's terms for dividing this twofold office, "king" and "conqueror," find clear historical precedent in the figure of William king and conqueror, who on the one hand clearly reserved his right as conqueror to redistribute England's lands as he saw fit, but on the other hand swore to uphold the old laws of his predecessor King Edward the Confessor. The appearance of Christ, king and conqueror in the shape of Piers Plowman underscores the implicit connection between Christ and William, whose Domesday Book so powerfully symbolized the continuity of English law in the fourteenth century, and also took its name from Christ's final judgment. As a man who knows his *plow*, Piers-as-Christ draws his authority not from his own divinity but from the collective memory of "folk-law," practiced in England from time out of mind and rooted in the landscape itself. Conscience's promise at the end of passus 20, to become a pilgrim and seek Piers Plowman, reflects the poem's continuous preoccupation with returning to the imagined origin he represents.

This leads us back to Piers's pardon, *redde quod debes*. It is telling that the gnomic difficulty of this pardon—for example in conceptualizing what one "owes," whether it is purely material or spiritual, and how it ought to be calculated—is addressed in the poem with its most extended description of Piers's actual "plow," built from the text of scripture and authoritative commentary. This symbol represses the quasi-legal meaning of the word *plow* at the very moment where that meaning is most strongly evoked by the narrative. Like the William of Robert's *Chronicle* and the plowmen of the B prologue, Piers in passus 19 is charged by Grace to assess the land and its people to learn their worth, and to have them pay what they owe.⁴⁹ Though the symbolism of the plowteam and the seeds of the four virtues clearly mark Piers as a preacher in Barney's sense, the textual nature of the plow also marks Piers more fundamentally as literate, as indeed he must be if he is going to be a procurator, reeve, registrar, and purveyor in fourteenth-century England. But instead of reading from account books, charters, and the other mundane legal documents that Langland consistently associates with procedural abuse,

48. See Green, *Crisis of Truth*, pp. 338–75.

49. On the connection between the B prologue passage and B 19, see most recently Wood, *Conscience*, pp. 82–86.

Piers's literacy manifests in his symbolic transformation into a kind of living text himself, who drives a plowteam made of scripture as part of an extended metaphor borrowed from a biblical parable, to sow virtues in the people who dwell in the land.

B passus 19 is not fully described, then, if we characterize its narrative merely as an abortive gesture toward higher, spiritual matters. On the contrary, this passus's homiletic vision of Piers at his spiritual plow is a retreat from the expectation created by Grace's assignment of duties, that here we will finally see the precise methods by which Piers would govern his earthly *plou*.³ Defining Piers's administrative practices in any detail would deprive Piers of the resonant ambiguity that allows him to function in the poem as a symbol of true justice. The very bureaucratic mechanisms for recording the kinds of legal practices that Piers would use to keep track of the money he collects and distributes are the same mechanisms used by Pride to introduce confusion and discord into the Holy Church. Piers's administrative practices must be vague by definition, dependent as they are not on protocol but on the inner virtue of the people themselves. It is the very unthinkability of Piers's administrative practices—the pure impossibility of imagining what Piers the Plowman would do if he were put in charge of things—that gives him such suggestive power in the poems that bear his name, and that gave his name such suggestive power in the political discourse of fourteenth-century England.⁵⁰

50. Thanks to Fiona Somerset, Nicholas Watson, and all of the conference's participants for their thoughtful feedback in preparing this essay for publication.

The Exegesis of Tears in Lambeth Homily 17

M. J. TOSWELL

Homilies and sermons are by definition oral texts. Although they might be written down in manuscripts or books or on websites, they are for preaching, for oral delivery in a public context. The great model for preaching is of course Jesus in the New Testament, and it is hardly surprising that whenever preaching renovates itself it does so with a call to return to the biblical foundations of the genre, to engage with the scriptural approach to teaching the Christian truth. Thus, when the Second Vatican Council reinvented preaching in the early 1960s, it did so in the context of a return to the early Church, and more specifically to the approach of the early Church as based in the Bible and on the interconnectedness of preaching and the liturgy.¹ The sermon or homily was not, for Vatican II, a break in the service, but an integral part of Christian rites from time immemorial. At the same time, this analogy of Vatican II and its attempts to reconceptualize the role of the sermon in the liturgical services of the Catholic Church demonstrates one fundamental point, which is that the history of homiletics is a history of both continuity and rupture. Sometimes the continuity is pretended, sometimes the rupture between one mode of preaching and another is less a matter of substance than of form, but frequently in the history of preaching there is discussion of a new approach, a new engagement, a new kind of thinking. In this chapter I examine one homily on the exegesis of tears, by some scholars argued to be an Anglo-Saxon text found in an early Middle English manu-

1. See Robert P. Waznak, *An Introduction to the Homily* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), pp. vii–xi.

script and by others as a new composition in Middle English, to consider how these fault lines of continuity and rupture played out in one twelfth-century context—and, of course, in the scholarship generated concerning that homily in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Exactly what is truth and what is tale may perhaps be determined along the way.

How exactly homilies functioned in the early Church remains something insufficiently considered, at least in part because the evidence is uncertain. Some preachers must have improvised, taking the scripture readings of the day and elaborating and explicating them. Others must have looked for models to work from, or even complete sermons to deliver word for word. The latter would have been particularly happy to discover the useful and pragmatic homilies and saints' lives prepared by Ælfric, and frequently copied in late Anglo-Saxon England and early Anglo-Norman England. These are the timeless concerns of those obliged to teach (or to lecture): finding material, delivering it well, finding or in a pinch inventing the next *tranche* of material. Still, the balance between oral invention and written prescription must have varied geographically and chronologically, as well as according to the tastes of a particular preacher and congregation.

Moreover, at various points in the history of medieval Christianity, different modes and approaches to preaching developed, if the written record is to be trusted. For example, the surviving preaching collections of Anglo-Saxon England are largely in the vernacular, and preaching in England before 1066 appears to have been in Old English. Some of the extant manuscripts of these vernacular preaching materials, written or adapted into the vernacular by Ælfric, Wulfstan, and others, are organized into a *Temporale*, chronologically reflecting the major feasts of the Christian year, and others suggest a *Sanctorale*. Other manuscripts have a considerably more miscellaneous content, suggesting perhaps that the copyist took material as and when it became available. We have, therefore, a considerable quantity of material from before the eleventh century, but only Wulfstan offers us a clear sense of how he reworked his material from occasion to occasion, offering a short version of his *Sermo Lupi ad anglos* in one codex, and various longer versions in others. Wulfstan also had what we would nowadays call an oral sensibility, with lots of rhythm, repetition, rhetorical balance and parallelism, and extensive use of alliteration and doublets in the various versions of his written texts. He must have been a powerful and evangelical preacher, in addition to an administrative wizard who organized extensive copying of his preaching texts and notes.

In the ensuing generations, these vernacular materials continued to be copied, and presumably preached. However, the twelfth century famously invoked a more formal rhetorical approach to the preparation of homilies

and sermons, with commentary by such figures as Alain of Lille on the art of preaching itself, and with the addition of exempla, illustrative stories and anecdotes, to homilies based on scriptural or doctrinal materials. How exactly this shift took place in different areas of Christian Europe may perhaps be approached one text at a time. In England, that shift was complicated by the Norman Conquest and the continued copying, and presumably preaching, of texts in Old English through the twelfth century and perhaps into the early decades of the thirteenth century. One text, therefore, a brief homily on a psalm verse found in two interrelated vernacular manuscripts from Anglo-Norman England, offers both a range of political and linguistic complications and a clear sense of how preaching functioned in the transitional twelfth century.

In the Lambeth Homilies and the Trinity Homilies, large sections of which are copies of Anglo-Saxon homilies, there appears a short treatise explicating Psalm 126:6, in the Vulgate Psalms 125:6–7, which in the Douay-Rheims translation is:

125.5 Going, they went and wept, casting their seeds. 6. But coming, they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves.²

The entire text of the treatise occupies just over three sides in both manuscripts; in the shorter version (Lambeth), after an opening discussion of the verse, the homilist draws four specific, largely biblical, links to explain situations of tears and weeping: to Mary Magdalene's tears as she washed Christ's feet,³ to Christ's tears as he raised Lazarus from the dead out of compassion for Martha and Mary Magdalene [*sic*], to the tears of Job and David as they presented their disgust with the world and their desire to leave this strange land, and to the tears of every righteous man who wishes to go to heaven and send forth from himself his "hate teres" (*hot tears*). The last section of the text as it appears in the Lambeth Homilies item 17, as edited by Richard Morris, states:

Ʒos fure kunnes teres boð þe fuwer wateres; þa þe beoð ihaten us on to weschen þurh ysaiam þe prophete þus queþende. beoð iweschen; and w[u]-nieð clene. *Lacrima compunctionis est amara sicut aqua maris. Þe tere þet*

2. *The Holy Bible, Douay-Rheims with notes by Bishop Challoner . . . by Pope Leo XIII* (New York: Douay Bible House, 1941; repr. Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto, 2007), Psalm 125:5–6 (p. 575).

3. T. O'Loughlin and H. Conrad-O'Briain point out that this moment is the "essential metaphor of penance in Greek Christianity"; see "The 'baptism of tears' in Early Anglo-Saxon Sources," *Anglo-Saxon England* 22 (1993): 65–83, p. 76.

mon wepð for his agen sunne; is also salt water, and þer fore hit is inemned see water. *Lacrima compunctionis comparatur aque niuis; que defluit contra calorem solis.* Þe ter þet .Mon. schet for his emcristenes sunne; is inemned snaw water for hit melt of þe neche (nesche?) horte swa deð þe snaw to-geines þe sunne. *Lacrima peregrinationis; comparatur aque fontis. quia sicut hec ebullit de terra; ita illa de cordis angustia.* Þe ter þet .Mon. wepð for laðe of þisse liue; is inemned welle water. for he welleð of þe horte swa doð water of welle. *Lacrima contemplationis comparatur aque roris. quia sicut aqua illa nutu dei trahitur ab imo in altum; ita illa emanat per alti desiderium.* Þe ter þet .Mon. wepð for longinge to heouene; is inemned deu water for alswa se þe sunne drach up þene deu. and madeð þer of kume reines; swa madeð þe halie gast þe .Mon. bi-halden up to houene. and hwenne he ne mai þider cume also raþe se he walde; he send þider his hate teres.

[These four kinds of tears are the four waters in which we are commanded to wash and become clean according to the prophet Isaiah who said this: The tear that one weeps for one's own sin is as salt water, and therefore it is named sea water. The tear that one sheds for the sins of his fellow-Christian is called snow-water, for it melts from the tender heart as does the snow against the sun. The tear that one weeps for loathing of this world is called well-water, for that tear wells from the heart as does water from the well. The tear that one weeps through longing for heaven is called dew-water, for as the sun draws up the dew and makes rain come from there, so the Holy Ghost makes us look up to heaven, and when we may not come there as quickly as we might wish, we send there our hot tears.]⁴

Morris omits the reference to the prophet Isaiah as the origin of this exegesis, presumably because he could not find such a passage in the biblical book.⁵

4. Richard Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises* (Sawles Warde, and þe Wohunge of Ure Lauerd: Ureisuns of Ure Louerd and of Ure Lefdi, &c.) of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, Early English Text Society, o.s., 34 (London: Trübner, 1868), 154–59, this passage pp. 158–59; for simplicity, I use Morris's translation, with Latin omitted and a few additions and corrections. Morris is the first to state "it has never, I believe, been previously pointed out that these Homilies are a compilation from older documents of the eleventh century," specifying that there are often transliterations directly from Old English manuscripts. He suggests that homilies 1 through 7 are all by the same author, and that 9 and 10 are both copies of Ælfric texts; see p. x of his preface. The most recent reconsideration of Morris's emendations and editorial approach is E. G. Stanley, "Lambeth Homilies: Richard Morris's Emendations," *Notes and Queries*, n.s., 54 (2007): 224–31. See also Sarah M. O'Brien, "An Edition of Seven Homilies from Lambeth Palace Library MS 487" (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1985).

5. The book of Isaiah has much in the way of weeping and lamentation, but nothing that moves in the direction of this exegesis.

The same material occurs also in the Trinity Homilies, also edited by Morris, in a somewhat expanded form.⁶ At the end of this lengthier exposition the homilist states that St. James experienced these four kinds of tears, and the congregation must now follow this example. As a result, Morris titles the homily, number 25 in the Trinity manuscript, as being for St. James.⁷ The revised and expanded Trinity version improves in many ways on the Lambeth homily, with added poignant details: for example, the first kind of tears is given two biblical explanations as Peter's tears at his denial of Christ are added to Mary Magdalene's tears while washing His feet; and in the final explanation of the four kinds of water this weeping is specified as that which an individual does concerning his or her own sins, which is therefore very bitter, like salt water—thus, the tears of seawater. The exegesis of tears in these two homilies is both clever and sophisticated, moving through the four levels of medieval biblical exegesis seamlessly and potently. The Old Testament and the New Testament appear, as does an application that is specifically allegorical and tied to Christ, and the anagogical application to the life of every righteous Christian individual. Complex and elegant, the passage is also touching and quite beautiful. It offers a charming and deeply moving approach to the compunction of the soul that demonstrates itself in the gift of tears.

The specific context of this treatise has been much discussed in recent years, since the “third wave” of concern with the twelfth century broke upon the field of medieval English studies.⁸ The first wave, as scholars of this period

6. Richard Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century*, Early English Text Society, o.s., 53 (London: Trübner, 1873), pp. 144–53. The most recent description of the vernacular texts is Linne R. Mooney, *The Index of Middle English Prose, Handlist XI: Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995), p. 15 for Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.14.52. She describes the manuscript as a “collection of 32 sermons or homilies . . . for the first Sunday in Advent through Pentecost, and for some saints’ days beginning with St. John the Baptist’s” (p. 15).

7. The fullest analysis of the contents of the Trinity Homilies manuscript is in Veronica O’Mara and Suzanne Paul, *A Repertorium of Middle English Prose Sermons. Part I: Introduction, and Cambridge University Library to London, British Library (Additional)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 139–94. The description of item 25 is pp. 176–78; the compilers list the occasion as either St. James the Greater or St. James the Less, and identify the theological concept of the homily as repentance.

8. The implied comparison here is to the “third wave” of feminism, and although the details of the contents of each wave are in dispute, the first wave is generally perceived as achieving equal rights, notably the right to vote and to stand for election and to think about equal pay; the second wave broadens the focus to the empowerment of women more generally, ranging from sexual empowerment to the rereading of texts for their treatment of women and the discovery of new and unnoticed female authors. The third wave to some extent beats upon the shore and ripples back in new and exciting directions but generally perceives feminism as different for every individual, inclusive, and engaged on whatever level might be desired. See Lorraine Code, *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories* (London: Routledge, 2000), s.v. “first-wave feminism,

are well aware, was the historian Charles Homer Haskins's evocation in 1927 of a twelfth-century renaissance and vigorous new life for architecture, literature, iconography, and everyday living;⁹ while the second—lamenting the failure of the first wave to take hold—was the collection by Giles Constable and Robert Benson *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, published in 1982.¹⁰ As with other third waves, this third wave of twelfth-century approaches rejects the sense of rupture and new life invoked in the first two waves in favor of anchoring the English twelfth century in its Anglo-Saxon past, and arguing for a much closer connection between late Old English texts and their copying and reworking in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.¹¹ There have been a number of elements to this third and highly English rediscovery of the twelfth century, including a preliminary collection of essays, a conference, and at least one major research grant.¹² The culmination of the current wave appears to be the work of Elaine Treharne, Mary Swan, and Orietta Da Rold in their online project entitled “The Production and Use of English Manuscripts, 1060 to 1220.” The three scholars argue implicitly against the traditional notion of a rupture at the Norman Conquest after which the scriptoria were purged of their fusty Anglo-Saxons and replaced

second-wave feminism; third-wave feminism” (although Code constructs third-wave feminism as a reaction against both first- and second-wave approaches).

9. Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927).

10. Giles Constable and Robert Benson, eds., *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982). A line of development that is tangential to the approach here concerns the development of the conception of the self; see, in particular, Sarah Spence, *Texts and the Self in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

11. The ferment of this third wave has not affected the reference texts on the period; thus Christopher Cannon in *The Grounds of English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) begins with a chapter entitled “The Loss of Literature: 1066,” and turns classically through the *Brut*, the *Ormulum*, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, the texts of the *Ancrene Wisse* and the Katherine Group, and the early romances. These texts, and generally speaking all of the other texts in which Old English materials are copied in the Middle English period, are absent. The trajectory is remarkably like that in R. M. Wilson, *Early Middle English Literature*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1968), although Wilson does prove a point about the historiographical tradition in his fifth chapter, “The Continuity of the Homiletic Tradition,” pp. 106–27, discussing both the Trinity Homilies and the Lambeth Homilies in terms solely of continuity from Old English to Middle English homiletic texts.

12. The groundwork for the project is laid in *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), which has the editors' introduction and ten papers, largely divided by genre (gospels, saints' lives) or author (Wulfstan, Ælfric). Susan Irvine in a wide-ranging article argues that the main issue is whether these Old English texts were just copied, perhaps with antiquarian tendencies or a veneration of history, or compiled for use; see “The Compilation and Use of Manuscripts Containing Old English in the Twelfth Century,” pp. 41–61.

with the cold and clear thoughts of Norman monastics, old vernacular sermons jettisoned in favor of new European thinking in Latin, and so forth. Treharne, Swan, and Da Rold present very detailed codicological descriptions of the manuscripts in English in England for the first hundred and fifty years of Norman and Plantagenet rule, so that new initiatives in manuscript layout can be analyzed and the continuing presence of Anglo-Saxon materials placed in a more coherent context.¹³ Their work remains deeply significant, its tendrils of meaning as yet not fully analyzed.

The Lambeth and Trinity homilies therefore stand as something of a proving ground for this notion of the continuity of Old English materials, for copying and for preaching, for adapting, and for remembering. Both are early manuscripts among the surviving examples of Middle English, either late twelfth century or early thirteenth century. Both include a considerable number of Old English homilies, sometimes heavily reworked and sometimes in copies that would have been approved by Ælfric himself. Both also include five texts common to the two manuscripts (one of which is the treatise on tears that is our focus) that do not appear to derive from Anglo-Saxon originals, at least not surviving Anglo-Saxon texts.¹⁴ Other texts in both manuscripts are certainly Ælfrician; Celia Sisam was the first to point out, followed by Swan, that the copies and redevelopments of homilies by Ælfric are a separate set in the Lambeth manuscript (Sisam has three subsets with detailed explanations for each).¹⁵ Ælfric in general seems to attract post-Conquest

13. See "The Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1060 to 1220," ed. Orietta Da Rold, Takako Kato, Mary Swan, and Elaine Treharne (University of Leicester, 2010), available at <http://www.le.ac.uk/ee/em1060to1220/>, ISBN 095323195X. The final work of the project is an e-book that offers brief introductory discussions and the catalog of just over 200 manuscripts that is the centerpiece of the work to date. The Lambeth manuscript is described by Mary Swan, and the Trinity by Elaine Treharne. The catalog builds on and supplements, with very full palaeographical and codicological descriptions, the work of Richard Gameson, notably in his *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England c. 1066–1130*, British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship Monograph (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also the magisterial catalog of N. R. Ker, the original starting-point for the Leicester project, which includes manuscripts containing Old English written before circa 1200: *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957).

14. Swan, "Preaching Past the Conquest," p. 406. Later in the article Swan notes that "the confident and creative recasting of a pre-Conquest Old English devotional text seen in Lambeth 487 makes it clear that the necessary conditions for such vernacular homiletic production were all in place in at least one part of the country in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century" (p. 422). She also discusses on pp. 407–9 the interleaving of Latin quotations, which occurs in many of the homilies, as a Middle English technique that in her view is being applied to the pre-Conquest material; by this argument, the five texts in question, which all seamlessly interweave Latin and early Middle English in the mode of the Middle English sermon, could be part of this reworking of pre-Conquest materials.

15. See Celia Sisam, "The Scribal Tradition of the *Lambeth Homilies*," *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 2 (1951): 105–13.

annotation and updating, both by the tremulous hand of Worcester and in other manuscripts copied and used after the Conquest.¹⁶ As Richard Morris originally argued, and Sisam and Swan have more recently, Ælfrician texts appear in items 1 through 5 and 9 through 13. Sisam notes orthographical evidence that separates this Ælfrician group from Group B, including items 7, 8, 14 through 17, and the eighteenth work, a copy of the *Poema Morale*. She excludes item 6, a rhyming and nonalliterative poem on the *Pater Noster* (assigned by Swan and Morris to the first group of specifically Anglo-Saxon and clearly Ælfrician works), both because orthographically it has elements of both groups and because its use of rhyme makes it unlikely to be Anglo-Saxon in origin. In these respects it matches the last of the eighteen original items in the manuscript, the *Poema Morale*, although the scribe breaks off in the middle of this text, leaving room for the end. The other texts in Sisam's Group B, including the treatise I am focusing on here, are in her analysis not Anglo-Saxon in origin. Sisam's further conclusions largely agree with Swan's more recent argument: that the dialectal and orthographical evidence suggest that Group A is from an older but not wholly different linguistic tradition than Group B, that the scribe copying this material from two source manuscripts probably did revise and update the language so that a dialect coloring of the West Midlands was imposed on the entire text as first written, and that the material was intended for a preacher. Unlike Swan, Sisam argues for a letter-for-letter scribal tradition of copying, and adduces various examples where the scribe of 1200 or slightly later had trouble understanding the letter forms of the copy-text.

Ralph Hanna addresses the Lambeth Homilies palaeographically, stating after his preliminary description of the manuscript and its contents that "the book is the product of *literatim* copying brilliantly reconstructed in Sisam's study."¹⁷ He also argues for two discontinuous sources, and further suggests that Sisam's largely orthographical argument replicates itself in the shifts in copying procedure that are to be identified in the production of the book. Hanna corrects the collation of the manuscript by M. R. James, arguing for six quires, and proposing that the original plan for largely Old English material

16. Elaine Treharne uses Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 162 to make this point, a collection of Ælfric homilies written at the beginning of the eleventh century but annotated through to the middle of the fourteenth century; see "Making Their Presence Felt: Readers of Ælfric, c. 1050–1350," in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 399–422; the consideration of CCC 162 is on pp. 406–19.

17. Ralph Hanna, "Lambeth Palace Library, MS 487: Some Problems of Early Thirteenth-Century Textual Transmission," in *Texts and Traditions of Medieval Pastoral Care: Essays in Honour of Bella Millett*, ed. Cate Gunn and Catherine Innes-Parker (York: York Medieval, 2009), 78–88, p. 82.

had been added to and expanded sequentially. In other words, the manuscript developed as a series of accretions. The little treatise on tears falls at the end of Hanna's quire 5, folios 57v–59v. The copying practice in this quire, with a full twenty-nine lines on a small page and the length of the copying line expanded at both margins to fit in all of items 14 to 17, suggests to Hanna that this section was also intended to be discrete and sufficient unto itself; Hanna concludes that "Lambeth 487 has been pieced together out of (at least) two pre-existing books . . . supplemented sequentially as additional interesting exemplars became available."¹⁸ Hanna sees a compiler impelled by expediency, seizing and copying, with appropriate changes to dialect and language use, texts that seemed appropriate and useful. Moreover, Hanna sees the manuscript as wholly of the early thirteenth century, placing it firmly in a Middle English context, not an afterlife of pre-Conquest materials but—judging by his final comparison of the Lambeth Homilies with the copying procedures in London, British Library MS Cotton Titus D. xviii (a manuscript with a copy of the *Ancrene Wisse* and three of the Katherine group texts)—as a Middle English compendium of useful texts found along the way. Margaret Laing concurs from a historico-linguistic point of view, noting that differences in the language used by the single scribe of the first eighteen items coincide with the beginnings and ends of the individual sermons, and fits the language of both the predecessor texts and this manuscript "provisionally in NW Worcs."¹⁹ Her pictogram of the dimensions of the scribe demonstrates, as she puts it, "one man representing one place at two different times."²⁰ Laing agrees with Hanna that this scribe works *literatim*, faithfully copying his exemplars, which themselves represented local modifications of the texts they included. This scribe is no reviser, no careful reworker of these texts.²¹

Celia Sisam and Ralph Hanna, then, construct this treatise as a new work, perhaps contemporary with the manuscript, which they all date at the end of the twelfth century or beginning of the thirteenth. Sisam and Laing do not draw firm conclusions about the date, although Hanna does, assigning a

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 84–85.

19. See Margaret Laing, "Multidimensionality: Time, Space and Stratigraphy in Historical Dialectology," in *Methods and Data in English Historical Dialectology*, ed. Marina Dossena and Roger Lass (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), 49–93, p. 73.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

21. Laing's argument with respect to the Trinity Homilies manuscript is more complex, arguing for a shift in exemplar coinciding with a shift in linguistic usage just before the treatise on tears; in general, Laing concludes for the codex as being from Suffolk, to the east and north of the East Midlands. See "Multidimensionality," pp. 67–71. Laing suggests that the Trinity Homilies' date is the last quarter of the thirteenth century, but this is probably a typographical error for the last quarter of the twelfth century, as the Trinity Homilies are generally dated before the Lambeth Homilies.

firmly thirteenth-century context to the text. Mary Swan, on the other hand, argues for a continuing tradition of largely Old English devotional material for reading and preaching in the late twelfth century.²² Some fifteen manuscripts produced between the later eleventh century and the early thirteenth century include Old English homilies; Lambeth 487, she proposes, includes “devotional texts of a variety of kinds: some framed with the rhetorical markers of homilies, and others not.”²³ Moreover, she argues that the first eighteen items in the Lambeth Homilies, all written by the same scribe around the year 1200, were all created by the same mind as well. That is to say, one individual reworked earlier materials in various ways through the first eighteen texts, reframing and rewriting along the way. In particular, three of the adapted reconstructions of Ælfric’s homilies might not have been reworked from a written original but were memorialized reconstructions.²⁴ This is a bold claim, as it suggests that a writer in 1200, a hundred and fifty years after the Conquest, was thinking in English and reading extensively in English to reframe and rethink a collection of Old English homilies. Elsewhere, Swan posits concerning the “mobile libraries” in the West Midlands and Worcester that Lambeth 487 “is an example of ongoing activity” in “post-Conquest West Midlands Old English manuscript production.”²⁵ In addition to this ongoing

22. An overview is Mary Swan, “Old English Textual Activity in the Reign of Henry II,” in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II*, ed. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 151–68.

23. See Mary Swan, “Preaching Past the Conquest: Lambeth Palace 487 and Cotton Vespasian A. XXII,” in *The Old English Homily: Precedent, Practice, and Appropriation*, ed. Aaron J. Kleist (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 403–23, p. 405. Elsewhere, Swan argues with regard to Lambeth 487 that it is “a collection of homiletic and devotional texts” in a small manuscript that could have been prepared as devotional reading for the use of a pious individual, perhaps—following the argument of Sarah Foot about secular vowesses in late Anglo-Saxon England—a pious woman in Worcestershire, an inheritor of the eleventh-century Worcester tradition of accommodation for female religious; see Mary Swan, “Imagining a Readership for Post-Conquest Old English Manuscripts,” in *Imagining the Book*, ed. Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 145–57. The argument concerning Lambeth 487 is Swan’s only example of this kind of devotional reading, and appears to depend on the small size of the manuscript and its irregular approach to copying; see pp. 154–57. Swan does also point out that the usually unmentioned nineteenth item in the manuscript, copied in during the middle of the thirteenth century, is a devotional text, the prayer “On Ureisun of oure Louerde,” which is generally seen as an example of the new approach of affective piety and passionate involvement in the Crucifixion.

24. She refers to items 9, 10, and 11 in this argument. Swan makes a similar argument with very detailed analyses of several homilies from other manuscripts in “Memorialised Readings: Manuscript Evidence for Old English Homily Composition,” in *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts and Their Heritage*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine M. Treharne (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 205–17.

25. Mary Swan, “Mobile Libraries: Old English Manuscript Production in Worcester and the West Midlands, 1090–1215,” in *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of*

capacity to compose Old English, there are cases of “texts newly composed in English after 1066 of which literary style and sensibilities, as well as the language, fit much more closely with Old English traditions than with Middle English ones.”²⁶ With respect specifically to the Lambeth Homilies, Swan cites in this category the rhyming *Pater Noster*, and some of the other “Old English-affiliated items”; on the five items without clear Old English antecedents she argues carefully that although the Christocentric devotion that they move toward did occur in late pre-Conquest texts, these trends “gather momentum in the Henrician period” and are “more a feature of post-Conquest Old and Middle English, rather than pre-Conquest Old English literary traditions.”²⁷ Swan’s final conclusion, then, is significantly more nuanced and careful on this small group of homilies than at various points earlier in her work, but she still ties the material firmly to Old English literary traditions.

On the other hand, the antecedents for this treatise derive from the learned and Latinate tradition of Christian devotion, not from a literary or vernacular milieu of a much earlier generation. The second of the four kinds of tears in the text, the tears of snow water, derive from Job 9:30, “If I be washed as it were with snow waters, and my hands shall shine ever so clean,” though the usage does not depend directly on the biblical text but on its exegesis, which is where the liquid involved becomes tears. As Sandra McEntire points out, Gregory refers to the tears of snow water as the tears shed in humility in his analysis of this verse in the *Moralia in Job: Aquae enim nivis sunt lamenta humilitatis* (“For ‘snow water’ is the weeping of humility”).²⁸ The *Moralia* was one of the most well-known patristic texts of medieval Europe; the *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici* website lists seventy-nine uses to date, mostly in Bede and Ælfric.²⁹ It appears to have been readily available in Anglo-Saxon England, according to Michael Lapidge listed in three different inventories of libraries, quoted by many of the major authors of the period, and surviving in fully thirteen manuscripts of fragments from the eighth century to the end of the eleventh (sixteen if manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon mission to Germany

the English West Midlands from the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century, ed. Wendy Scase (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 29–42. The discussion of Lambeth 487 is on pp. 41–42, this quotation in two parts on p. 41.

26. Swan, “Old English Textual Activity,” p. 152.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

28. See Sandra J. McEntire, *The Doctrine of Compunction in Medieval England: Holy Tears* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990), p. 40. I quote Gregory from McEntire here, and use her translation, since she is the one who found this reference. For the full explication, see *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne 75 (Paris, 1849): 321a (bk. 9, chap. 36); now most readily available at <http://pld.chadwyck.com>.

29. *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici Project*, ed., *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register*, <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/> (accessed June 4, 2012).

are included).³⁰ So readily available was this text that David Bell describes it casually as “the ubiquitous *Moralia* of Gregory the Great” in his discussion of the fourteenth-century inventory of the library of the rather small Benedictine priory of St. James at Deeping.³¹ Gregory’s construction of tears of compunction as efficacious, as flowing from the process of purification of the soul, is clearly the impulse that gives rise to the further development of the exegesis.³² Given the early ubiquity and frequent reference to the *Moralia* from the earliest Anglo-Saxon times onward, tracing when and how the further development of this particular exegesis took place—derived as it is from Gregory’s single mention of tears as snow water—may be difficult.

This treatise is one of five texts in both the Lambeth Homilies and the Trinity Homilies that do not have obvious Anglo-Saxon antecedents. Celia Sisam states of these that “some were perhaps translated from Latin in the twelfth century.”³³ Bella Millett concurs, arguing that the five texts in both manuscripts are without question post-Conquest productions, in no way “backward-looking”³⁴ but rather the product of a new kind of vernacular spirituality.³⁵ Millett places these texts in the modern sermon context of the

30. Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 305–6. The most noteworthy recent discovery listed by Lapidge is a fragment from Wearmouth-Jarrow at the beginning of the eighth century, now in the Yale Library.

31. David N. Bell, “The Libraries of Religious Houses in the Late Middle Ages,” in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, vol. 1, *To 1640*, ed. Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 126–51, p. 138.

32. See the three articles by René Wasselynck for the most detailed consideration of the early medieval reception of the *Moralia*: “Les compilations des «*Moralia in Job*» du VIIe au XIIe siècle,” *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 29 (1962): 5–32, which starts from Gregory’s own contemporary Paterius and moves through the abbreviated versions of Odo of Cluny, Guillaume de Champeaux, and Walter d’Aversa to the twelfth-century imitators and doctrinal compilations; “Les «*Moralia in Job*» dans les ouvrages de morale du haut moyen âge latin,” *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 31 (1964): 5–31, tracing the influence on Isidore through Smaragdus, Alcuin, Hrabanus Maurus, and others; and “L’influence de l’exégèse de S. Grégoire le Grand sur les commentaires bibliques médiévaux (VII–XIIe s.),” *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 32 (1965): 157–204, considering exegetical influence rather than the moral on Isidore, Bede, many eighth- and ninth-century commentators, and the twelfth-century rethinking from Bruno d’Asti to the *Glossa Ordinaria*, Hugh and Richard of Saint Victor, and others. Wasselynck is particularly good on minor and unpublished commentators. For an overview, see P. C. Spicq, *Esquisse d’une histoire de l’Exégèse latine au Moyen Age* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1944), pp. 76–78 and 112–14 (for the twelfth-century exegesis).

33. Sisam, “Scribal Tradition,” p. 110.

34. See Bella Millett, “The Pastoral Context of the Trinity and Lambeth Homilies,” in *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the English West Midlands from the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Wendy Scase (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 43–64. Millett is exercised by the term “backward-looking,” which she reviles on p. 50 and again on p. 64. This argument is developed throughout the chapter, although it is restated most firmly on p. 64.

35. Although she addresses a different complex of texts, Cate Gunn makes surprisingly similar points about the *Ancrene Wisse* and its allied materials in her *Ancrene Wisse: From Pas-*

twelfth century, the scholastic tradition with its Latin model sermons such as those in Alan of Lille, Alexander of Ashby, and Thomas of Chobham.³⁶ These five texts, she argues, have Latin elements whose sources are yet to be traced; some even have traces of instructions to the preacher. She is not interested in arguments for the continuity of pre-Conquest and post-Conquest vernacular texts. Instead, Millett focuses on what she terms the disjuncture between Old English and Middle English homiletic prose. In fact, it could almost be argued, albeit rather fancifully, that her goal is to detonate the traditional notion that sermons in particular continued across the pre-Conquest divide, stalwart soldiers of the Christian faith, while other texts and genres failed at the breach.³⁷ Millett notes that Sarah O'Brien had previously argued for Lambeth 1 (generally seen as one of the clearly Anglo-Saxon texts) as owing a debt "to an early twelfth-century Continental Latin source" and for the use of later twelfth-century preaching techniques in two of the five overlapping texts.³⁸ Millett argues with respect to this treatise that its main *distinctio* has a relatively close parallel in a sermon by Peter Comestor for All Saints' Day, in which he discusses tears as being the bread that God feeds to Christians and divides tears into four kinds of bread based on the four causes of weeping.³⁹ Comestor's structure certainly resembles the *distinctio* at work in the first part of the sermon, but the closest analogue to the concluding section on the aqueous origins of the four kinds of tears seems to be Garner of St. Victor's *Gregorianum* and its book 7, which has many scattered parallels in expression, especially for the well water and snow water.⁴⁰ Both Peter Comestor and Garner of St. Victor were among the Victorines, the core of the University of Paris

toral Literature to Vernacular Spirituality (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008). Gunn argues that *Ancrene Wisse* is a manifestation of vernacular spirituality and affective piety, whose contexts include the Beguine sermons and the rhetorical techniques used in preaching.

36. Millett, "Pastoral Context," p. 51.

37. Bella Millett, "The Discontinuity of English Prose: Structural Innovation in the Trinity and Lambeth Homilies," in *Text and Language in Medieval English Prose: A Festschrift for Tadao Kubouchi*, ed. Akio Oizumi, Jacek Fisiak, and John Scahill (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), pp. 129–50.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 134–35.

40. Millett offers other references linking tears with different types of water, including Peter of Blois, Thomas of Chobham, Thomas the Cistercian, and Alan of Lille; none of these, however, has a *distinctio* that offers a source for the four kinds of tear-origins in the concluding paragraph. Nicholas Watson very kindly suggested a parallel in Garner of St. Victor's *Gregorianum*, a rethinking of Gregory's *Moralia in Job* (surprisingly not listed in Wasselynck referred to above), which follows the early work of Paterius in reconstructing Gregory's text into an encyclopedia. Book 7 concerns waters; the closest parallels occur in cols. 283D–284A on snow water and col. 300B on well water, both of which make the relevant link to tears and to humility; see *Patrologia Latina* 193, cols. 279–304 at <http://pld.chadwyck.com>.

in the second half of the twelfth century, which makes Victorine involvement in the Latin source of this text certain. The Victorines, like many before them, found Gregory's *Moralia in Job* a central exegetical and moral text for their spiritual lives.⁴¹

Millett's argument arrives at the heart of the difficulty. The treatise is in a context that appears to suggest some continuity of thought from eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon England to late twelfth-century Anglo-Norman England. It is short and relatively direct, its exegesis simple and straightforward. The Lambeth Homilies version is not quite as coherent as the Trinity Homilies version, which has a stronger sense of balancing the different ways of constructing tears in the Old and New Testaments and in the life of the ordinary Christian of the time. Given the brevity of the text, its technique of offering a clause in Latin and then a careful translation into the vernacular might suggest a close translation of a Latin original. That Latin original most probably came from St. Victor but is not yet fully identified, as the *Patrologia Latina* offers no really close parallels for any of the Latin in the text. For Millett and other scholars of Middle English, this technique of quoting the Latin and then providing careful exegesis suggests only a context of the twelfth century or later. It remains worth noting, however, that Anglo-Saxon sermons also have this kind of presentation, and in the same amount of careful detail.⁴² Similarly striking is the fourfold exegesis, which seems somewhat precise and ordered. Traditionally, sermons have been divided rather firmly into the "ancient form," in which following the fathers of the Church the homilist expounds the entire gospel, generally to a lay congregation, and the "modern form," from the twelfth century onwards, in which the homilist divides and subdivides the question at issue, a scriptural theme which is then expatiated upon using distinctions that are inherent in the text but not obvious.⁴³ Most of

41. In addition to the Wasselynck articles cited above, for the Abbey of St. Victor, see Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), chap. 9, "The Victorine Ordering of Mysticism" (pp. 363–418), which ties the mysticism of both Hugh and Richard directly to Gregory the Great, for which see also chap. 2, "Gregory the Great: The Contemplative in Action" (pp. 34–79). For Garner of St. Victor, see R. E. Kaske, *Medieval Christian Literary Imagery: A Guide to Interpretation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 44.

42. See, for example, Joyce Hill, "Reform and Resistance: Preaching Styles in Late Anglo-Saxon England," in *De l'Homélie au Sermon: Histoire de la Prédication Médiévale*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse and Xavier Hermand (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1993), pp. 15–46, an excellent overview of the extant homiletic literature, very little of which conforms to the "ancient form" explicating a gospel or epistle, and most of which is exegetical or moral, often with enumerative structures.

43. A fine explication is H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), chap. 6, "Sermon Form" (pp. 228–68). See also *Medieval Sermons and Society: Cloister, City, University*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse et al. (Louvain-La-Neuve: Fédération

the sermons in the Lambeth and Trinity Homilies demonstrate the organizational sense of Ælfric, and derive directly or indirectly from his work, which is in the “ancient form.” The exegesis of tears as a treatise certainly has a very specific and clear-cut structure, but it is also so short that it remains difficult to determine whether it really is the modern form with *distinctiones*, a clear advancement from the *divisiones* that marked the early stages of the genre. Bluntly put, it could be either.

Moreover, as many writers on the sermon point out, the genre is intended to be oral; this manuscript, as all its students agree, develops in accretive stages that suggest a local preacher adding texts and reworking them along the way. The Lambeth Homilies therefore testify to the truth of Thomas Amos’s statement about the difficulties of sermons prepared by the literate for oral delivery to a largely nonliterate audience: “Much of the literature produced by this literate group—sermons, poetry, legislation, saints’ lives, even charters—can be regarded as written records of primarily oral forms or transactions.”⁴⁴ That is to say, we are looking at the work, or the transcription, by a relatively literate preacher, or by a scribe on behalf of a preacher, providing material that might already have been preached at the same or a greater or a lesser amount of detail, or that might have been worked out as something that could be preached. In other words, the best parallel in the modern day might not be a book of sermons, but a PowerPoint deck or draft of a lecture. Some notes are to be expanded in a lecture, others condensed, and some simply serve as a jumping-off point for the oral gyrations of the lecturer. Without knowing personalities and practices in some detail, we simply cannot tell.

Whatever else might be said about this short homily and its four fellows in the Lambeth and Trinity Homilies, the language of continuity as against

Internationale des Instituts d’Études Médiévales, 1998), and the very useful essays in *The Sermon*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle, *Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge Occidental* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000).

44. Thomas L. Amos, “Early Medieval Sermons and Their Audience,” in *De l’Homélie au Sermon: Histoire de la Prédication Médiévale* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1993), 1–14, pp. 13–14. A surprisingly similar point is made by Thomas N. Hall in the unusual context of sermons written in Latin that appear to have been intended for preaching to a lay audience that would have been likely to have somewhat limited knowledge of Latin; see “Latin Sermons and Lay Preaching: Four Latin Sermons from Post-Reform Canterbury,” in *The Power of Words: Anglo-Saxon Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Jonathan Wilcox (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 132–70, p. 155. Hall notes that we should give heed “to the varieties of literate practices and experiences that were available to the laity and to the possible contexts of Latin preaching in the late Anglo-Saxon period.” Mary Swan also considers the preacher’s engagement with the audience, analyzing the point of view in three homilies written in Old English in “Constructing Preacher and Audience in Old English Homilies,” in *Constructing the Medieval Sermon*, ed. Roger Andersson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 177–88.

rupture does not well explain this material. Other homilies in the same manuscripts have been reworked, perhaps from memory, by the twelfth-century adaptor, by the scribe, or by the preacher (perhaps all in one). The most interesting feature of the homily remains its Englishness, for the use of the vernacular suggests that at this point in the twelfth century someone was at work rethinking this material.⁴⁵ What we have here are, pretty evidently, wholly new translations in early Middle English, probably prepared in the Midlands and certainly worked out in the last third of the twelfth century. They are clearly not new compositions, and especially not new compositions harking back to a mode of explication popular in late Anglo-Saxon England. They are translations, but translations that rework the material into early Middle English. They suggest a clear and unfettered effort to render Christian thinking, late twelfth-century doctrine such as the exegesis of tears, into English. There is no sense of anxiety about having these texts in the vernacular; it is their proper language as far as the compiler of this manuscript was concerned. What these texts do reflect quite precisely, therefore, amid their inscrutabilities, is what happens in the one set of texts that hardly ever gets mentioned in discussions of vernacular materials in the early Middle English period: the psalms. Several of the bilingual psalters generally discussed as Old English were written at or well after 1100, with the Eadwine Psalter's interlinear vernacular version belonging, at the very earliest, to the middle of the twelfth century. Tessa Webber states of the script of that text that it "represents a remarkable fusion of elements from the Anglo-Saxon past with developments of the twelfth century."⁴⁶ She places the manuscript in the 1150s, so the interlinear Old English version of the psalms appears in a manuscript that is at the center of Anglo-Norman Christianity, prepared at Christ Church Canterbury, nearly a hundred years after the Conquest. Moreover, Christ Church Canterbury was the most highly sophisticated scriptorium in Anglo-Norman England, with its own house style both in script and in illustration, and with a clear set of changes to the house script that allow paleographers to track documents through the decades of the twelfth century. Moreover, the Eadwine Psalter of the 1150s connects to an even later manuscript, the Catalan Paris Psalter, or the Great Paris Psalter, now Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale

45. See, for example, Elaine Treharne, "The Life and Times of Old English Homilies for the First Sunday in Lent," in *The Power of Words: Anglo-Saxon Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg on His Seventieth Birthday*, pp. 205–40. She argues that "twelfth-century English texts were dynamic, usable, and current" (p. 207).

46. Teresa Webber, "2. The Script," in *The Eadwine Psalter: Text, Image, and Monastic Culture in Twelfth-Century Canterbury*, ed. Margaret Gibson, T. A. Heslop, and Richard W. Pfaff (London and University Park: Modern Humanities Research Association and Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 13–24, p. 24.

MS lat. 8846, written just before 1200. In that manuscript there are odd and fitful glosses of the Roman Psalter into Old English, not many of them, but enough to suggest that the scribe both saw Old English in the exemplar and knew it well enough to copy it—before suddenly remembering that it was not intended to be in this manuscript. In other words, we can date relatively precisely that point at which, in Canterbury, Old English was no longer wanted in a manuscript—between 1190 and 1200. On the other hand, with these two manuscripts of homilies we have far less sophisticated productions possibly done by individuals for their own use rather than produced in a major and highly disciplined scriptorium.

Written in a period falling precisely in between the Eadwine Psalter and MS lat. 8846, the Trinity and Lambeth homilies demonstrate that preparing materials in the vernacular for worship and for devotional purposes continued through the second half of the twelfth century. These two scruffy and unsophisticated manuscripts, practical compilations for use by preachers or for reference, mostly likely produced by individuals for their own use, were absolutely not prepared in a major and highly disciplined scriptorium. Both, however, reflect mainstream intellectual traditions concerning preaching in the twelfth century, although from a vernacular English perspective. And with MS lat. 8846, at the turn of the thirteenth century, that perspective changed and, at least at Canterbury, English was no longer wanted. What all four manuscripts reflect, therefore, is a changing attitude to the vernacular in the second half of the twelfth century. What had been continuity, to some a surprising continuity, was no longer. Nonetheless, all four productions reflect a fusion of Continental and Insular thinking that moves our consideration of Christian vernacular spirituality in England significantly farther forward. The two great psalters were triple psalters, both heavily illuminated and heavily glossed, with extensive Latin notes reflecting the long tradition of psalter commentary. The Eadwine Psalter had two sets of vernacular translations, in Old English / early Middle English and in Anglo-Norman. The Great Paris Psalter had only Latin glossing. The Trinity and Lambeth homily manuscripts reflect learned and Latin traditions, but do so in a relatively fluent English vernacular. Perhaps neither manuscript, both pragmatic works intended for quotidian use, was unusual or unexpected. Preachers do need homilies, and they use the material that comes to hand.

Mingling with the English in Lazamon's *Brut*

FIONA SOMERSET

Let me begin with a very old story that I have heard many times, about a four-cornered lake and its four kinds of fish. I myself cannot vouch for its truth: I did not hear it from a friend, or the friend of a friend, nor did I read it on a *tabula* at the site.¹ What I can say is that my written sources seem strongly invested in presenting it as a local marvel, strange but true, and that the reasons for that are worth exploring. The version I will focus on appears in Lazamon's *Brut*, although there are related versions in his proximate and remote sources Wace's *Roman de Brut* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie* as well.² In all three of these renditions, my story is told by Arthur himself, to his friend and nephew Howel, and placed amid the victories of Arthur's youthful rule.³

1. On these media, see essays in this volume by Green and Van Dussen.

2. I use Lazamon's *Brut*, ed. G. L. Brook and R. F. Leslie, 2 vols., Early English Text Society, o.s., 250 and 277 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963 and 1978), modifying punctuation and citing by line number; and for its introduction and notes, Lawman, *Brut*, trans. Rosamund Allen (New York: St. Martin's, 2002). For Wace, see *Roman de Brut: A History of the British*, ed. and trans. Judith Weiss, rev. ed. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), cited by line number. For Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie*, see *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of De Gestis Britonum*, ed. Michael D. Reeve and trans. Neil Wright (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), cited by page and line numbers.

3. Lazamon's version appears on lines 10970–84, Wace's on lines 9537–54, and Geoffrey's on p. 203, lines 10–16. Wace expands Geoffrey, and Lazamon expands Wace in turn, each also adding content from other sources: see Françoise Le Saux, "Manuscripts, Sources, and Adaptation Principles," in *A Companion to Wace* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), pp. 24–58, and Françoise H. M. Le Saux, *Lazamon's "Brut": The Poem and Its Sources* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989). I follow Lazamon's version of the story here, noting relevant differences.

Directly after his crushing defeat of the Scots, and after negotiating a peace treaty with them that is very much to his own advantage, Arthur invites Howel, his Breton kinsman and ally, to marvel at the sight of Loch Lomond. Yet, Arthur tells Howel, there is a yet greater marvel at the end of the loch. There, where the water flows out, there is a very small lake dug by fairies—the supernatural origin of the lake is unique to *Lazamon*, as is the precision of its location. The lake has four corners, each containing one kind of fish:

Feower-noked he is, and þer-inne is feower kunnes fisc.
and ælc fisc an his ende þer he his cun findeð.
ne mai þer nan to oðere buten al swa tacheð his icunde. (10978–80)

Only in a kind of natural prodigy is it possible to imagine that fish of different kinds might each keep to their own home, “an his ende þer he his cun findeð,” and never mix.

The new setting for this story that these three authors introduce is not arbitrary, even if only *Lazamon* develops its implications by juxtaposing it so abruptly with Arthur’s defeat of the Scots. After fulfilling his vow to drive the Saxons from England and avenge his father, a vow he made before the British people at his first mass public assembly after being raised to the kingship, Arthur advances north to defeat the Scots, on the first leg of what will become his first international military campaign. Ruler after ruler along his route will capitulate rather than fight, having perhaps heard what happened to the Scots. Arthur routs them, crushingly, and drives them into Loch Lomond, where he pursues them and starves them out, rocky island by rocky island. But rather than slaughtering them all—for unlike the Saxons they are fellow inhabitants of his own island, and fellow Christians to boot, and it is their women and children who importune him for mercy—Arthur offers the Scots the first of many peace treaties he will negotiate on this campaign. *Lazamon*’s description of the Scots’ subsequent retreat into their own territory draws our attention to just how they divide as they return to their homes: “þat folc þer todelden, / ælc mon to þan ende þer he wes wuniende”—they separate entirely, each man returning to the “ende” where he dwells, amid the “londe” where Arthur has slain so many of their “leoden” (10954–55, and see 10924).⁴

Lazamon now shifts the scene to Arthur’s conversation with Howel by Loch Lomond with a kind of jump cut, an abrupt switch into direct speech,

4. On “todelden” and similar verbs, see Marshal S. Grant and Douglas Moffat, “*Lazamon*’s Archaic Use of the Verbal Prefix To-,” in *The Text and Tradition of Layamon’s Brut*, ed. Francoise Le Saux (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994), pp. 15–28.

his favorite mode of exposition.⁵ He invites readers to compare the fish and the Scots through the verbal echo between “ælc mon” and “ælc fisc,” as well as the “ende” where each dwells. More ordinary fish, like the Scots in the preceding scene, may retreat to their own homes, each “to þan ende þer he wes wuniende,” but they will not stay there. The preternatural orderliness found in the fish of the four-cornered lake underlines the difficulties of any peace treaty that seeks to demarcate jurisdictions in a durable way. The four-cornered lake may, indeed, be a natural prodigy that Lazamon himself is unwilling to believe in, even as a marvel. For Lazamon is the only teller of this story who qualifies the claim that the fish may not leave their corners, “ne mai þer nan to oðere,” with the exception “buten al swa tacheð his icunde,” except as his nature dictates⁶—an exception that could diminish the force of the claim, or even negate it.

Lazamon’s skepticism that humans or animals of any kind might remain separated into their various natures, each in the homes where they might be thought to belong, is so far as I know unique to his retelling of this much older story. More broadly, a tendency to qualify or complicate separationist claims about peoples, languages, and dwelling places in his sources and his speakers is pervasive in his history as a whole—the “ambivalence” about the Saxons that Daniel Donoghue has influentially attributed to Lazamon is just one of its manifestations.⁷ Geoffrey is the first to incorporate the four-cornered lake into his account of Arthur’s youthful campaigns: earlier the lake appears in lists of the Marvels of Britain that surely circulated orally,

5. Admittedly some text may be lost here, but Lazamon does slip from narrative to dialogue elsewhere too. See Lucy Perry, “‘Þus heo hit spoken’: Direct and Indirect Speech in the Two Versions of Lazamon’s *Brut*,” *Neophilologus* 92 (2008): 523–43.

6. The *Middle English Dictionary* (hereafter *MED*) cites only this quotation as evidence to justify an otherwise unattested sense of “tachen” as “to collect together or shoal with (its own species)”: see “tachen” (v.(1)), def. 1f. I think derivation from “tach(e)” (n.(3)) def. 1, the commonly attested noun used to refer to the disposition or habits of a type of animal or person, is more likely. The force is concessive, whatever translation may be given: Wace instead elaborates.

7. Daniel Donoghue, “Lazamon’s Ambivalence,” *Speculum* 55 (1990): 537–63. See also James Noble, “Lazamon’s Ambivalence Reconsidered,” in *Text and Tradition*, ed. Le Saux, 171–82; Carole Weinberg, “Victor and Victim: A View of the Anglo-Saxon Past in Lazamon’s *Brut*,” in *Literary Appropriations of the Anglo-Saxon Past from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Donald Scragg and Carole Weinberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 22–38; Michael Faletra, “Once and Future Britons: The Welsh in Lawman’s *Brut*,” *Medievalia et Humanistica* 28 (2002): 1–23 (Faletra also discusses the four-cornered pond, as I discovered late in writing this essay); and Elizabeth Salter, “Culture and Literature in Earlier Thirteenth-Century England: National and International,” in *English and International: Studies in the Literature, Art, and Patronage of Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 29–74.

but that Geoffrey likely discovered in the *Historia Brittonum* of pseudo-Nennius, a source he uses extensively.⁸ Wace follows Geoffrey in placing the lake at Loch Lomond rather than its traditional location in southeast Wales. Yet only Lazamon foreshortens this episode's juxtaposition with Arthur's defeat of the Scots in such a way that this textually mediated snippet of oral culture become not only marvel, but metaphor. The marvelous fish in their four-cornered lake highlight by contrast a common understanding of what is natural: the Scots, described in closely similar terms, are like more ordinary fish in a lake in that it is not in their nature to dwell in their own "ende," but rather to travel far and wide across the island of Britain, and beyond, settling and persisting in places that please them and mingling with other groups to the point where they are often indistinguishable.⁹ Lazamon extends this metaphor, and develops his readers' critical engagement with disputes over land and belonging, across the whole course of his vast poem, as I will show: he places and moves animals on his landscape in a variety of what seem natural or unnatural ways. He does so especially through the animal-topographical imagery he introduces into his treatment of the Arthurian dynasty, and above all in its much-expanded account of Arthur's campaign to expel the Saxons from Britain. It may indeed have been the old story of the marvelous fish in the four-cornered lake that gave Lazamon the idea of developing his poem's argument this way in the first place.

8. Pseudo-Nennius, *Historia Brittonum*, is edited and translated in John Morris, *Nennius: British History and the Welsh Annals* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1980): see 81/33–82/3. In this early version the Finnaun Guir Helic is one of twenty marvels listed, and is among a cluster of eight of them located in southeast Wales, along the border with England—close to the Severn valley region where Lazamon later writes, in fact. For these locations see Brynley F. Roberts, "Culhwch ac Olwen, The Triads, Saints' Lives," in *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature*, ed. Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman, and Brynley F. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 73–95, pp. 89–90. Lists of local marvels of this kind were circulated in textual form, of course, from Pliny's *Natural History* and Solinus's *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium* on through Mandeville's *Travels* and beyond. But they also strongly evoke contexts of popular and oral transmission; of rural (if not urban) legend: "it is said," "I have heard."

9. Travel up and down, intermingling, and indistinguishability "þat nes nan . . . þat mihte todæle [hem]" are especially prominent as the Saxons arrive and establish themselves: see for example, 7242–58, 7606–8. Robert Bartlett's amply documented account of how multilingual, multiethnic societies on the "frontiers" of Europe in the High Middle Ages developed an understanding of race based in language, law, religion, and descent helps to corroborate both the persistent cultural and linguistic plurality Lazamon portrays, and what was at stake in establishing or questioning means of distinction: see chaps. 8 and 9 in *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 197–242.

Land, People, Language: The Topography of Kingship

The figures Lazamon positions and moves across the landscape of his poem begin with himself: his prologue grounds his poem's claims about land and people in his own experience, and in the circumstances of his poem's composition. He tells us that he is a priest "on leoden." Here I quote the longer and more elaborate version of the poem in BL Cotton Caligula A ix:¹⁰

An preost wes on leoden Lazamon wes ihoten.
 he wes Leouenaðes sone liðe him beo Drihten.
 He wonede at Ernleȝe, at æðelen are chirechen.
 vppen Seuarne staþe sel þar him þuhte.
 on-fest Radestone þer he bock radde. (1–5)

Lazamon's academic-style prologue describes the author and tells us what brought him to write the book, what its subject matter is, what his source materials were, his method of composition, and the book's final form.¹¹ Both in his description of himself here, and in his description of his research method in the passage that follows, he foregrounds not only his reading of books ("þer he bock radde") but his relationship to the land and its people and languages.

In telling readers that he is a priest "on leoden" in his first line, Lazamon introduces one of his poem's key terms. Lazamon uses "leode" frequently to refer to either a specific land or its inhabitants.¹² Sometimes it seems clear that he refers only to land, or only to a land's people, but more often "leode(n)" seems to refer to both, as here: Lazamon is both "in the land" and "among the people." Yet "on leoden" elsewhere in the poem also refers not to the land or

10. The two manuscripts are London, British Library Cotton MS Caligula A. ix (Caligula) and London, British Library Cotton MS Otho C. xiii (Otho). The general critical consensus is that while Otho is clearly redacted from a Caligula-like version, neither can be given priority as a version closer to Lazamon's original: both are late thirteenth-century copies. On Caligula see N. R. Ker, *The Owl and the Nightingale: Facsimile of the Jesus and Cotton Manuscripts*, Early English Text Society, o.s., 251 (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. ix–xx. On Otho, see Elizabeth Bryan, *Collaborative Meaning in Scribal Culture: The Otho Lazamon* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2010). See also Jane Roberts, "A Preliminary Note on British Library, Cotton MS Caligula A. ix," in *Text and Tradition*, ed. Le Saux, pp. 1–14.

11. For thorough discussion of the Caligula prologue, see Andrew Galloway, "Lazamon's Gift," *PMLA* 121 (2006): 717–34, pp. 719–22. Stephen Yeager, "Diplomatic Antiquarianism and the Manuscripts of Lazamon's *Brut*," *Arthuriana*, forthcoming, compares the prologues in Caligula and Otho.

12. "Leode" designates land or people over four hundred times in the *Brut*: this count includes compounds and adjectival forms. See the electronic version of Brook and Leslie's copy of the Caligula version in the *Middle English Compendium*, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mec/>.

the people, but to their language: this potential meaning echoes here in the opening line, as a kind of demi-pun.¹³ The *Middle English Dictionary* indeed notices that “lede,” meaning 1) person, man; 2) people, nation; and 3) land, landed property, had considerable conceptual influence upon “leden,” meaning 1) Latin; 2) language, speech, song; and 3) birdsong, animal noise, vocal utterance.¹⁴ Scholars of later Middle English will be familiar with “leden” in its second and third senses, used to refer to “speech” or “voice” or “birdsong” or “animal sound.”¹⁵ But for *Lazamon*, and in the thirteenth century more generally, “leden” refers instead and only to the speech of a people or land: that is, to a language. The term is typically used to distinguish *between* languages: the Latin language, English language, “our” language.¹⁶ The term “leoden” has, in other words, the same scope and range of reference as “leode” meaning “land” or “people,” but refers instead to the *language* of that land or people—although of course the three terms need not be coextensive, indeed rarely if ever are they in practice. Cultural and linguistic identity and place overlap and coalesce rather than remaining distinctive, however much the coincidence of terms to describe all three may express a wish—perhaps the same wish expressed in the marvelous story of the four-cornered lake—that they might be one and the same.

The common ground occupied by his multiple languages, rather than by a single language, is what *Lazamon* himself traverses as his prologue continues. He elaborates on his use of his English, Latin, and French sources as he undertakes the research for his book, traveling far and wide across his land, “wide 3ond þas leode”—a descriptive formula that will recur again and again in his poem:¹⁷

Lazamon gon liðen wide 3ond þas leode.
and bi-won þa æðela boc þa he to bisne nom.
He nom þa Englisca boc þa makede Seint Beda.
An-oþer he nom on Latin þe makede Seinte Albin.

13. *Lazamon* uses “leoden(e)” to refer to the English language as “vre leodene” at lines 1065 and 1179, and as the “Englisc leoden” at 14811. He also refers to “Godes leoden” at 14815, and employs two compounds built on “leode” to refer to language: “leod-quide” (1456) and “leod-spelle(n)” (7863, 14645).

14. The terms are derived, respectively, from Old English “le(o)d, le(o)de” meaning “man” or in feminine plural “people, nation,” and from Old English “læden/leden/lyden” meaning Latin or by extension another foreign language. See *MED*, s.vv. “lede” (n.(2)) and “leden” (n). For the comment on the influence of “lede” on “leden,” see the latter entry.

15. See, for example, Chaucer’s “Squire’s Tale,” in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), V.435, 436, 478.

16. See *MED*, s.v. “leden” (n.). See also Galloway, “*Lazamon’s Gift*,” pp. 717–18.

17. Galloway likewise notes usage later in the poem: “*Lazamon’s Gift*,” p. 726.

and þe feire Austin þe fulluht broute hider in.
 Boc he nom þe þridde, leide þer amidde.
 þa makede a Frenchis clerc,
 Wace wes ihoten. . . .

 Lazamon leide þeos boc and þa leaf wende.
 he heom leofliche bi-heold liþe him beo Drihten.
 Feþeren he nom mid fingren and fiede on boc-felle.
 and þa soþere word sette to-gadere.
 and þa þre boc þrumde to are. (14–21, 24–28)

Never mind that we know Lazamon relies most heavily on Wace, among his named sources here. In the process of his own composition he augments the Anglo-Norman poet's work extensively, largely by adding spoken dialogue, much of it perhaps imagined, some perhaps available to him in other legendary stories conveyed orally or in writing.¹⁸ Here, however, he presents his compositional process as that of compiling the true parts of three authoritative early histories of his land discovered in his travels across it, one in each of his land's written languages, into one book of his own.

Lazamon writes in English; but in marked contrast to the authors of most later Middle English prologues, he makes no claims for the special suitability or pre-eminence of English: the language in which he writes his own poem seems almost incidental to him.¹⁹ In hindsight, the decision to write a poem about the history of England since its British beginnings at great length, in an experimental metrical scheme that draws deep on the wells of literary tradition and poetic language, yet for the first time since the Conquest in English rather than in Latin or French, seems a momentous one.²⁰

18. On these expansions see Le Saux, *Lazamon's "Brut"*.

19. In contrast, see some of the prologues printed in *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1520*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999): Robert Mannyng's *Chronicle* (1.1), Thomas Usk's *Testament of Love* (1.4), the *Northern Homily Cycle* (2.1), Trevisa's *Dialogue between a Lord and a Clerk* (2.2), *The Prick of Conscience* (3.7), Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (3.10), and *Cursor Mundi* (3.14). See also essay 4.2, Nicholas Watson, "The Politics of Middle English Writing," pp. 331–52.

20. On Lazamon's meter, see Rosamund Allen, "'Nu seiþ mid loft-songe': A Reappraisal of Lawman's Verse Form," in *Lazamon: Contexts, Language, and Interpretation*, ed. Rosamund Allen, Lucy Perry, and Jane Roberts (London: King's College London Center for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 2002), pp. 251–82; Eric Weiskott, "Lawman, the Last Old English Poet and the First Middle English Poet," in *Lazamon's "Brut" and Other Medieval Chronicles: 14 Essays*, ed. Marie-Françoise Alamichel (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013), pp. 11–57. Le Saux surveys claims about Lazamon's "Englishness" in chap. 8 of *Lazamon's "Brut"*, pp. 184–227. For the argument that

Yet from Lazamon's point of view, it seems more the case that English is his poetic vehicle (and one that allows him to innovate in extraordinary ways) for depicting linguistic multiplicity in the history of his land, than that his use of it is a partisan assertion or the product of an attempt to address a new or broader audience.²¹ Still, in his historically self-conscious use of language, and also in his self-designation four times in his prologue with the name or cognomen "Lazamon," a name obviously not British, it is clear that Lazamon does not lay claim to indigenous status as a priest of the land and of the people on the grounds of British descent, or as a speaker of British.²² Rather than claiming to be a descendant of those whose history he tells, he claims only to dwell on their land, and to have traveled all over it, in addition to reading its best previous histories.

Lazamon's Founding Narrative

Lazamon's claim to authority is residence-based and avowedly (even if limitedly) multilingual, then—for he makes no claim to having engaged directly with Celtic languages.²³ His claim is not ethnic, monolingual, or lineal. Yet the position he claims for himself is far from the final or only position on the relationship of people, land, and language in his *Historia*. Instead, the kings and peoples who quarrel and struggle over residence and rule in their lands across the course of Lazamon's larger history make conflicting claims, often self-contradictory or self-destructive ones, about how these relationships should play out: clearly this is one factor in the success or failure of kings and regimes that Lazamon labors to track. There is, for example, a sharply different kind

Lazamon's language is self-consciously antiquarian, see E. G. Stanley, "Lazamon's Antiquarian Sentiments," *Medium Aevum* 38 (1969): 23–37.

21. Similar conclusions on Lazamon's chosen language and anticipated audience are reached by Lesley Johnson and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "National, World, and Women's History," in the *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 92–121, p. 98.

22. On the possibility that Lazamon's name is a cognomen, referring to a man who practices law, see *Brut*, trans. Allen, pp. xxiii–xxiv; and John Frankis, "Lazamon or the Lawman? A Question of Names, a Poet and an Unacknowledged Legislator," *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 34 (2003): 109–32. See further Christopher Cannon, "Lazamon and the Laws of Men," *English Literary History* 67.2 (2000): 337–63.

23. For views on Lazamon's knowledge of Welsh literary tradition, see chap. 6 in Le Saux, *Lazamon's Brut* (118–54). See also n. 8 above. See also Simon Meecham-Jones, "'Be tiden of pisse londe'—Finding and Losing Wales in Lazamon's *Brut*," in *Reading Lazamon's "Brut": Approaches and Explorations*, ed. Rosamund Allen, Jane Roberts, and Carole Weinberg (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), pp. 69–105.

of claim about indigeneity and possession at work early in *Lazamon's* history, in the midst of the founding narrative that leads the parricidal Brutus from Italy, to Greece, to Spain, to the island of Albion, which he promptly renames in his own language, and after himself, as Britain. *Lazamon* invites critical engagement even here, in what could otherwise easily be a straightforwardly triumphalist account.

At the point in his journey where I will begin, Brutus and his people are deciding where to settle. They have defeated the Greeks, and rescued from slavery the Trojans who were left behind in Greece, not having joined Aeneas on his journey to Italy. In the council of Trojans that ensues, Membricius persuades everyone, Trojan inhabitants of Greece and traveling Romans alike, that peaceful cohabitation with their former overlords in Greece is impossible: instead they need to seek a new land to inhabit. They should ask the king for a very ample settlement, including his daughter as Brutus's future queen in addition to goods and ships:

þat we mawen wel faren.
fare uorð ouer sæ sel þat we wrðen.
and liðen swa longe þat we to londe comen.
varen wide 3eond þat lond and fondia þeo leoden.
wer us beo iqueme (476–80)

There is a strong echo, here, in the proposed journey “wide 3eond þat lond,” of *Lazamon's* own account of his compositional process in the prologue: *Lazamon's* authorization of himself as poet and historian and his demonstration of Brutus and his people's justification in seeking and claiming for their own their eventual destination are closely aligned. The future Britons need to travel far and wide over the LOND that they will come to in order to find the LEODE—place, identity as a people, opportunity to speak their own language—that will be pleasing for them. There is no possibility of future harmony in Greece. “Fælleð his leoden,” Fell the king's people!, Brutus had ordered his troops, and they had complied (414). The remaining relatives of the Greeks they have slaughtered will not give up on revenge, Membricius argues: “for heora kun we habbet isla3en. in eorðe heo sleopeð” (485). The sleeping earth itself, as well as its remaining Greek inhabitants, is against them. Or, as Membricius neatly puts it, “fare we from þisse londe: þa leodene us beoð laþe” (498). The Trojans' unanimous endorsement of Membricius's one-land-one-people-one-language argument is, in part, what demonstrates that he is right—at this moment, in these circumstances, at any rate. There is

much talk and noise, and then the Trojans speak not only in one language, but in unison: “alle heo clepeden þus: Soð seið Membricius” (508).

Brutus’s reunited people have resolved, with one voice, that they need a new land. Never mind that after generations of settlement some of those embarking must be more Greek than Trojan, or that Brutus himself has just taken a Greek wife, Ignogen. But rather than counsel to the king endorsed by popular voice, it is a goddess’s revelation that finally sets Brutus on the right course to his people’s final destination. Later supernatural interventions will more typically take the form of riddling prophecies and of dreams and portents that receive expert, if often only partial, interpretation; but we will see that Cadwalader, Britain’s last British ruler, will receive an equally pellucid message from the Christian God in a dream vision at the end of the poem. At their first stop after setting sail, Brutus has a dream vision in the temple of Diana in which Diana promises to him just the sort of unpopulated island Membricius had suggested:

þar is fuzel, þar is fisc, þer wuniað feire deor.
þar is wode, þar is water, þar is wilderne muchel.

.....

Albion hatte þat lond ah leode ne beoð þar nane. (620–21, 624)

Animals, and even giants, live on Albion: it is scarcely empty, and the ensuing battle with the giants will be fierce. As far as Diana is concerned, however, Albion is a “londe” without “leode.” She and the Britons-to-be seem to agree that at this stage on their quest toward self-determination, only a land with plentiful resources yet with no other fully human inhabitants can offer them what they need in order to become a “leode” with their own “leode”—an indigenous people in their own right. Later, of course, and even without even needing to extend the scope of his narrative as far as the Normans who have conquered his own England, Lazamon’s account of the mingling and competition for dominance between people and their languages in the land that Brutus and his people will establish becomes much more complicated.

Constantin’s Conquest and the Rise of the British

The Arthurian section of Lazamon’s *Brut* is Lazamon’s most sustained attempt to provide a more flexible way of thinking about land, people, and language than the founding narrative of Brut’s journey to Britain can provide. In

returning to the question of Arthur's possible return at the end of the poem, Lazamon also revisits the problem once more, at the point where the British land, and then its people, reject its British king. If there ever was one people with one language on Lazamon's island, this is no longer the case at the moment just before the Arthurian dynasty enters the poem, as the Romans depart leaving the Britons to the mercy of Melga and Wanis and their large invasion force, mustered it seems from all over northwest Europe. Nor is there any reason to hope there ever will be. This part of Lazamon's history traces the intermittently expatriate line of kings "of Brutten . . . al icumen" (6348) that leads from Constantine through Uther and his brothers to Arthur, the best king his island has ever yet had. It takes place on a complicated and divided landscape deserted by Romans, depleted of Britons, but inhabited by Picts, Scots, men of Galloway, Irish, Danes, Norwegians; and new arrivals, during Vortigern's wily but shortsighted usurpation: the Saxons he will disastrously invite to be his allies. On this new terrain, both divine sanction and popular allegiance need to be reimagined in new ways. How a king might deserve, and receive, the support of his land's inhabitants becomes more crucial, and more telling.

So it is that when Constantin arrives with his army, sent by the king of Brittany in response to the British archbishop Guencelin's appeal to him to save Britain, the "Bruttes" rise to his appeal, out of the earth.²⁴ This is an episode that justifies what might otherwise look like a bloody invasion, and on the basis not only of Constantin's status as their kin, "of Bruttes . . . al icume"—for Vortigern after all is British too—but of the rightness of Constantin's action:

þæt iherde Bruttes þær heo wuneden i þan puttes.
 inne eorðen and inne stockes heo hudden heom alse brockes.
 i wude i wilderne inne hæðe and inne uærne.
 þæt ne mihte wel neh na man nenne Brut iuinden.
 buten heo weren in castle oðer y burhȝe iclused uaste. (6395–99)

The British are hiding in pits, in the earth—lurking under the land, like the soldiers Brutus massacred in Greece. But these Britons are alive, skulking like badgers even if they cannot be found in the open, just as they will be again

24. This arrival is properly a return, for Constantine is descended from Britons sent to the Continent by the Romans. On the return of an exiled king as a topos in historical writing as well as romance, and a means of legitimating kingship, see Laura Ashe, "The Anomalous King of Conquered England," in *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, ed. Lynette Mitchell and Charles Melville (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 173–93, esp. p. 180.

when they go to ground once more at the end of the poem before they leave for Wales.

When they hear of Constantine's arrival, then not just soldiers, but women too, "al þis folc" rise from their hiding places, leap from the woods and mountains, "swulc hit deor weoren"—as if they were animals:

þa heo iherden of þissen worde þat Constantin wes an ærde.
 þa comen ut of munten moni þusend monnen.
 heo leopen ut of þan wuden swulc hit deor weoren.
 Liðen toward Lundenne moni hundred þusend.
 bi straten and bi walden al hit forð hælden.
 and þa æhte wifmen wæpmonnes claðes duden heom on.
 and heo forð wenden toward þere uerde. (6400–406)

As if they were animals—why?²⁵ Lazamon may want to suggest that these "Bruttes" include peasants as well as fighters: they are not professional soldiers, as the presence of women who have donned men's battle clothes also suggests, but a force made up of all the able-bodied. Or he may be preparing his readers for the bloody savagery of their ensuing assault, which is swift and comprehensive, and stages a kind of fantasy of ethnic cleansing in which countless Picts and Scots and Danes and Norwegians and Irish are slain—even if this is a fantasy that this part of the poem cannot sustain, for they are not wiped out, any of these peoples, and they do not leave. There are more of all them in the ensuing narrative, and indeed Constantin will soon be betrayed and killed by a Pict who is part of his household, as if to demonstrate how right Membricius was all along. Even more fundamental to Lazamon's comparisons between humans and animals here and elsewhere, though, are their kinematic and topographical elements: what they let him express about force, motion, and position on the land. Badgers come up from the pits where they have gone to ground. Wild animals run down the mountains, or leap from the woods. A wolf lopes from the woodlands (10041–43). A wild crane makes a desperate flight for freedom through a moorland fen, where it is set upon by hawks and hounds (10061–67). A boar is enraged as he meets a crowd

25. Previous attention to Lazamon's animals has mainly focused on suggesting literary backgrounds for his more elaborate animal similes: see, for example, Jonathan Watson, "Writing Out Óðinn's Storm: The Literary Reception of an Oral-Derived Template in the Two Versions of Lazamon's *Brut*," in *New Directions in Oral Theory*, ed. Mark Amodio (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), pp. 209–36; H. S. Davies, "Lazamon's Similes," *Review of English Studies* 11 (1960): 129–42. For a survey of scholarly work on Lazamon's literary backgrounds more generally, see Lesley Johnson, "Tracking Lazamon's *Brut*," *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 22 (1991): 139–65.

of swine rooting for nuts, and morphs into a lion as he pursues them into the river (10609–14). These and *Lazamon's* many other human–animal similes allow him to develop a complex set of arguments about not only place, but *DIS*placement: people and animals go to ground or burst forth on land (or in water) where they variously do or do not belong.

Steel Fish and Other Unlikely Animals

Nearly all of *Lazamon's* animal similes are densely concentrated in the Arthurian part of the poem, although they have more indirect echoes elsewhere. They mostly appear in Arthur's battles with the Saxons, and the most sustained and colorful ones appear in Arthur's own battlefield speeches. Arthur's conflict with the Saxons is his first sustained campaign as king: he swears an oath to drive them from Britain and avenge his father's death at the first mass public assembly he holds after he returns from Brittany and is acclaimed as king.²⁶ This campaign against the Saxons is also the occasion for Arthur's only major policy blunder as king, one explicitly criticized by *Lazamon* (as it was not by Wace or Geoffrey): it is obvious to everyone else present that he is making a mistake, but none dares to advise him (10428–30). *Lazamon's* animal similes cluster around this error and its consequences, while his fish in the four-cornered lake allow him to return to their implications.

What *Lazamon* presents as Arthur's signal failure, curiously, is his attempt at a peace treaty with the Saxons. After the slaughter of Childric's forces that prompts Childric and Colgrim to surrender and promise (falsely) to go home, Arthur agrees to spare the survivors, takes hostages, and allows the remaining troops to return home. Yet this is just the kind of treaty that he subsequently succeeds in forging with the Scots, and then replicates all over northwestern Europe, in the process that produces the cosmopolitan court culture and patronage of poetry that *Lazamon* associates with Arthur's Round Table.²⁷ So it is puzzling that the attempt to treat with the Saxons should be so obviously an error. Arthur compares Childric to a fox that has been hunting and playing in the woods and on the hilltops and digging holes for himself, traveling wherever he likes. When men pursue him with horns and hounds, he flees to the wood and goes to ground, seeks out his hole. But men dig him out and

26. For Arthur's return and the oath to drive out the Saxons, see lines 9942–81. Only *Lazamon* has Arthur leave for Brittany then return to accept the kingship, intensifying the narrative's repetition of the exile-and-return topos (see n. 24 above).

27. On the fashioning of the Round Table to resolve tensions between groups in Arthur's court, see lines 11422–53.

deny him all his pleasure. Like Brutus's Trojans, like *Lazamon* in his prologue, the fox ranges far and wide—but over territory that is not rightfully his (not, at any rate, according to Arthur's simile).²⁸ Unfortunately, Childric is even more like a fox than Arthur realizes: this ironic insight is perhaps obvious to Arthur's army on the basis of their long experience with Saxon deception and subterfuge, much more so than to the newcomer Arthur. It may also be the product of several years of escalation, most recently Arthur's slaughter of their army. The Saxons pretend to depart, but then come ashore at Totnes to slaughter all the people and animals they meet, flatten buildings, and raze the land in a frenzy of destruction—the detailed description of their atrocities is new in *Lazamon's* version of events, and draws upon conventional representations of invaders to emphasize that these Saxons have come not to mingle through settlement, but to destroy.²⁹

In the renewed conflict with Colgrim and Badulf that ensues, Arthur tells his troops that Colgrim was bold enough yesterday, but now he resembles a goat guarding a hill from a wolf—a menacingly foreboding simile of the deaths still to come. Even if there were five hundred goats, the wolf would kill them all (10627–36). Arthur says that Badulf, on the other hand, looks down from the hill into the river, and sees there steel fishes—that is, his dead and dying troops. This metaphor backed up by reverse simile is perhaps *Lazamon's* most chilling image:

3urstendæi wes Baldulf cnihten alre baldest.
 nu he stant on hulle and Auene bi-haldeð,
 hu ligeð i þan stræme stelene fises.
 mid sweorde bi-georede heore sund is awemmed.
 heore scalen wleoteð swulc gold-faȝe sceldes.
 þer fleoteð heore spiten swulc hit spæren weoren.
 Þis beoð seolcuðe þing isizē to þissen londe.
 swulche deor an hulle, swulche fises in wælle. (10638–45)

The goats on the hill ready for slaughter, the steel fish dying or dead in the water, are “seolcuðe þing,” prodigies unexpected in nature, because “swulche deor,” “swulche fises,” *those* kind of animals, *those* kind of fish, are not the

28. For the fox simile, in Arthur's second engagement with the combined forces of Childric, Badulf, and Colgrim, where Arthur in turn has been bolstered by Howel and his troops from Brittany, see lines 10398–417. In the first battle with Colgrim, *Lazamon* had compared Arthur with a frost-grey wolf (10041–43) and the fleeing Saxons with a wild crane being pursued to its death by hawks and hounds (10061–67).

29. On conventions for representing invaders in Fantosme, see Ashe, “Anomalous King,” p. 186.

ones who can flourish there. Goats on a hill (in contrast with armed warriors in a fortified camp) cannot defend themselves against wolves, while steel fish (in contrast with the fish one ordinarily finds in streams) cannot swim. In mocking the opposing leaders whose army he is about to crush, Arthur goes out of his way to emphasize that they do not belong in the places where they are, rather as they did themselves in the dreadful vengeance they sought when they landed at Totnes.

Just who has the last laugh, though? It is all too ironic that in the act of killing Childric and Colgrim and Badulf, at the end of the ensuing battle, Arthur and Cador mock them again by granting them the land and people they had wanted, and will soon be buried under—and that their ancestors will later come to possess. Cador tells Childric he is giving him Teignwic as he kills him by the river Teign (10790–91), while Arthur gives his whole kingdom to Colgrim and Badulf in the course of a lengthy mocking dismissal uttered right after he kills them both: “Nu ich al þis kine-lond sette an eower ahjere hond. / dales and dunes and al mi drihtliche uolc” (10696–97; and see 10683–706). Just as with Arthur’s fox-simile, ensuing events make a mockery of these taunts. As Membricius could have told Arthur and Cador, what is sleeping under the earth never lies still. Arthur may himself be a successful king, but he cannot control the future—not, that is, unless he will later return, as the British hope, to restore their rule.

Mingled with the English: How It All Ends

Lazamon’s point is certainly not to prove that Membricius was right all along, as the fates of Constantine and of the Arthurian dynasty might seem to imply. Rather, he cumulatively conveys, with ever-increasing force as a succession of post-Arthurian British kings make fitful efforts to live in harmony with or else eradicate the Saxons who are increasingly their neighbors and relations, that no effort to restore the land he inhabits to the possession of one kind of people can ever succeed. Cadwalader, the last British king, might be said to make this argument in his own person: he is himself of mixed descent, the child of the British Cadwalan and his wife, who is the sister of Cadwalan’s Saxon ally the Mercian king Penda. The Christian dream vision that Cadwalader experiences is a reversal of Brutus’s divine mandate and popular support, and similarly the reverse of the popular and supernatural support given to the Arthurian line of kings.

The words of Cadwalader’s divine messenger (only Lazamon supplies them in direct discourse) are only the last in a series of reversals that Cad-

walader and his people suffer. Like Arthur's grandfather Constantin, like Aurelius Ambrosius, Uther, and Arthur, and like his own father Cadwalan, Cadwalader spends time living in exile in Brittany. In Cadwalader's case, he leaves England because although he has been a good king, well loved by his subjects, the land itself has rejected his rule, rebelling against human cultivation. Crops fail, famine strikes, the cattle die, plague kills many. This all-encompassing natural disaster is a sort of papal interdict writ large: the whole people is punished in order to get rid of Cadwalader—except that it is as unclear to us as it is to Cadwalader and his people what Cadwalader has done to merit this treatment.³⁰ The land's remaining inhabitants are forced back into the forests and hills to eke out a living by hunting wild animals—who continue to flourish—and by foraging for uncultivated food:

þat folc flah in-to wuden and wuneden in þe cluden.
leien in þa stan-graffen and liueden bi deoren.
Heo liueden bi wuden heo lifeden bi wurten.
bi moren and bi rote nas þer nan oðer boten. (15914–17)

Like the British lurking like badgers after the departure of the Romans and before Constantin's arrival from Brittany, these later inhabitants respond to a threat to their survival by going to ground. The land returns to the precultivated state it enjoyed before Brutus first arrived, and they live off its natural resources, like animals. It is only after Cadwalader leaves for Brittany and after his people have continued to suffer for eleven long years that the land is restored and its inhabitants are able to return from the woods into their towns.

The proposition that in order to restore the island to equilibrium a British king must leave the land, rather than return to it, is already startling enough. In a second startling shift, what the at-first-unspecified people who have been lurking in the woods resolve upon their emergence is to send abroad to tell their kinsmen to return:

men gunnen to sturien.
ut of wude heo droȝen and wuneden in tunen.
Heo speken to-somne and spileden bi-tweonen.

30. On the impact of papal interdict, see Peter D. Clarke, *The Interdict in the Thirteenth Century: A Question of Collective Guilt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). If Laȝamon were writing in the first two decades of the thirteenth century, he would have witnessed this impact firsthand, especially during Innocent III's interdict of John, 1208–14. Corroborating this speculative dating see also Galloway, "Laȝamon's Gift," p. 727.

and nomen heore sonde and sende in-to Sex-londe.
(15920–23, and see more broadly 15918–32)

The kinsmen these men of the woods send for are not Cadwalader, not the British, as the poem would repeatedly have led us to expect, but the Saxons—this surprise identification emerges in the second half-line of line 15923, as if to underscore that it is not so easy, by now, to tell one people from the other in England. These men tell their Saxon kinsmen that the British are now exiles, who will never again dare “mængen imong Englisce monnen” (15930), mingle with English men, and that it is time for Saxon rulers to reoccupy their island.

We might wonder whether it was only the British who were killed by plague and famine, while only their Saxon neighbors remain: a kind of ethnic cleansing by natural causes. But it is not quite that simple, although the Saxon prediction that the British will never dare mingle with them again might wish it so. For Cadwalader too receives messages. The British too, it turns out, were lurking in the woods. What Cadwalader hears from his British messengers in turn is not the happy news that it is time to return, but instead that he has been thoroughly supplanted: the Saxons have usurped, established new courts, remade the churches in the Saxon fashion, and given all the people and towns of his land Saxon names (15965–78).

Cadwalader's initial resolve is to set sail and reconquer his land, but this is the point at which the poem's final divine message puts him on a new course. In a dream vision, a messenger tells him to go to Rome instead, to confess to the pope, because the Britons will never again possess England until the time comes that Merlin foretold (16009–29). Just as Brutus's divine dream vision supported and gave further specificity to the decision made by his people, here, a message from a Christian rather than Roman God—though endorsing a prophecy by Merlin—reinforces and justifies the decision that England's Saxon inhabitants, now rendered indigenous it seems by time and hardship, have already made. No more British kings, they have said: we want it to be a Saxon who returns, this time, from overseas. Yet if the messenger speaks the truth, the Britons will also be back in power again, just as the Saxons were; nor have they left the island, any more than the Picts and Scots and Irish and Danes.

The story of kingship and popular consent that *Lazamon* wants to tell is not, then, a triumphalist narrative of definitive conquest: one land, one people, one language. Instead, what his history demonstrates, both in its larger arc and in the small-scale episodes and comparisons that play on readers' understanding of the natural world and the marvels that can occur within it, is that the struggle to reclaim the island for one people and no others is one

that no single group can win. The “ende” where *Lazamon* dwells in *Areley Kings* on the *Severn* does not confine him, any more than the corner of a lake can confine any but the most prodigiously unnatural group of fish: in traveling far and wide he learns to appreciate, and labors to convey to his readers, the benefits of a more complex understanding of community and belonging.

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Unquiet Graves

Pearl and the Hope of Reunion

ALASTAIR MINNIS

The stalk is withered dry, my love,
So will our hearts decay;
So make yourself content, my love,
Till God calls you away.¹

So advises the Child Ballad, “The Unquiet Grave”—well known to the honorand of the present volume, Richard Firth Green, a lover of popular song and narrative. This particular song is generally classed as a “revenant” ballad, wherein a ghost returns from the grave to terrorize the living. But, despite the dead woman’s warning that “one kiss” from her “clay-cold lips” would prove deadly to her lamenting lover (“Your time will not be long”), there is nothing threatening here. The main emphasis falls on the principle that to all things there is a season and death is inevitable; patient acceptance of the transitory nature of all earthly things is advised, until God calls the speaker away, to his own death.

The same advice is offered at the end of the Middle English poem *Pearl*, a work which, moreover, denies that the hearts of men “decay.”² The earth

1. *Child Ballads*, 78A, in Francis James Child Francis (ed.), *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, vol. 2 (Orig. pub. 1882–98; repr. New York: Dover, 1965), pp. 234–36.

2. *Pearl*, an intricately written and rhymed poem of 1,212 four-stress lines arranged in 101 twelve-line stanzas, recounts how, in a dream vision, a lamenting father encounters his dead baby daughter in the form of a fully grown woman. Now one of the “Brides of the Lamb” of God, she explains why she has been honored with such a high reward in heaven. The poem climaxes with a description of the maiden’s new and true home, the Heavenly Jerusalem (based on the vision recorded by St. John in the Book of Revelation, the Apocalypse). At which point

does not really mar the “merry jewel” who is the Pearl maiden: immortal diamond is immortal diamond. Love, in this case a bereaved father’s love of a daughter who died before she was two years old, will in some way survive the grave. However, its status is challenged in an Other World wherein the crucial relationships are those that exist between, and within, different ranks of the saintly dead. Earthly emotional ties pale when exposed to the incommensurable love of soul for soul, blessed virgin for blessed Virgin. Yet the poem values their human poignancy, dramatizes the pain of parental loss in the very act of affirming the superiority of what heaven has to offer.

In attempting to bring truth to tales of death’s divisive power, the *Pearl* poet draws on late-medieval Resurrection theology, which had undergone a period of transformative development within thirteenth-century scholasticism; the resultant body of doctrine was transmitted to subsequent centuries in widely disseminated reference books and religious manuals. An encounter is staged between a bereaved father and an adult female figure who turns out to be his baby daughter, envisioned in anticipation of the mature corporeal appearance that she will take on following the General Resurrection. A marvel indeed, but one quite explicable with reference to the theology of the future “time of glory”—though rarely, if ever, has such theology been presented with the emotional sensitivity and narrative power that marks this “talle farande” (“wonderful tale,” line 865).³

Peter Lombard’s *Libri sententiarum*, that textbook which, from the 1220s onwards, every theology student had to read, asserts that we need not doubt that a young child, “which was so small at birth,” will be “so great at the Resurrection.” For God will multiply that substance from itself, like the five loaves with which Christ fed five thousand people (Mark 6:35–44; John 6:5–13) and the rib from which Eve was made (Gen. 2:21–22).⁴ Further, resurrected bodies will maintain—any deformities apart—the distinguishing features they had while alive, thereby preserving their *integritas* (wholeness). This must mean that a child’s body in its “multiplied” form will bear some resemblance to its

the father figure excitedly tries to cross the stream that separates them—whereupon he awakes, and recognizes that he must await his own death, after which, he may hope, he will live with his daughter forever.

3. All quotations are from the edition of *Pearl* included in *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, 5th ed. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2011), pp. 53–110.

4. *II Sent.*, dist. xxx, cap. 15 (205), in *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, Spicilegium Bonaventurianum, iv–v (Grottaferrata: Ad Claras Aquas, 1971–81), 1.ii, 504–5; Giulio Silano, trans., *Peter Lombard: The Sentences* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2007–10), ii, 153.

appearance at the time of its death. Therefore in *Pearl* it is quite appropriate that the bereaved father should recognize the child who died so small (“I knew hyr wel,” 164), even as the wonderful *claritas* or brightness of her (future) resurrection body gladdens his spirit.

The more I frayste hyr fayre face,
Her fygure fyn quen I had fonte,
Suche gladande glory con to me glace
As lyttel byfore þerto watz wonte. (169–72)

His daughter stands before him in her glorified “fygure”: almost a heart-stopping moment (“Such a burre myȝt make myn herte blunt,” 176) for a parent who has long lamented her loss.

But will their earthly relationship as father and daughter survive, in some form or other, however exalted; is there any hope of a reunion of family (and friends) beyond the grave? According to the learned and lively book *Heaven: A History*, which Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang first published in 1988, during the early modern period friends “became an important ingredient of paradise”; “the restored paradise garden, the new Jerusalem, and heavenly love were redefined and brought into a new configuration. Without losing its divine center, heaven became more worldly, more human.” Sometimes this took quite extreme forms, as when “the new theology envisioned heaven as a place of erotic human love in the bucolic setting of a comfortable natural landscape.”⁵ The “new theology” McDannell and Lang have in mind here is the counter-Reformation theology of Catholic Europe—which, it would seem, bespeaks posthumous relationships that have advanced far beyond the one Dante imagined as possible between himself and Beatrice. Indeed, the possibility of seeing dead family and friends again in heaven is an interest that runs throughout this book; the authors place considerable emphasis on the influence of Cicero’s *De Senectute* and *Somnium Scipionis*, as having popularized the classical belief in family reunions beyond the grave, featuring “the long-established dead” greeting “new arrivals in the netherworld.”⁶

In the later Middle Ages, things were rather different; the intellectual trends are diverse, and hard to chart. A general monastic tendency to see

5. Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 112.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 60. It was precisely such belief that Christian theology of the afterlife sought to counter, by emphasizing conversion and individual salvation rather than lineage, thereby effecting a major disruption of kinship structures.

heaven (including the “new heaven” that, together with the “new earth,” will exist after the General Resurrection)⁷ as a parallel to, indeed a sort of extension of, a monastic community of spiritual brothers, was subjected to rigorous analysis within scholasticism. A good example is afforded by the passage in the *Summa theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) that addresses the issue of whether friendship is an aspect of the resurrection community of blessed souls. Aquinas takes the rigorous line that in the *patria*, our future Fatherland, the fellowship of others (*societas amicorum*) will not, strictly speaking, be necessary for happiness. Man needs God alone; a human being “is wholly and completely fulfilled” in Him. But Aquinas does allow heavenly fellowship a place, albeit a secondary and circumscribed one, when he says it is certainly conducive to “the well-being of happiness” (*ad bene esse beatitudinis*).⁸ At which point Aquinas quotes Augustine as saying that the blessed will “see one another and rejoice in God, at their fellowship.”⁹

Peter Lombard had gone further by remarking that, “through the charity which shall be perfect in each of them, each will rejoice in another’s good as much as he would rejoice if he had it in himself.”¹⁰ This statement takes us quite close to the priorities of *Pearl*. The elevated daughter tells her literalistic and earthbound father that the court of the kingdom of heaven has a special property: it is a totally uncompetitive place.

. . . neuer oþer 3at schal depryue,
But vchon fayn of oþerez hafyng,
And wolde her corounez wern worþe þo fyue,
If possyble¹¹ were her mendyng. (449–52)

7. “I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth was gone” (Apoc. 21:1). Cf. Isaiah 65:17: “Behold I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be in remembrance.”

8. *Summa theologiae*, 1a 2ae, qu. 4, art. 8, resp., in St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Blackfriars ed. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964–81), xvi, 114–15. An “anti-social affirmation” has been detected in this passage, a charge from which Aquinas has vigorously been defended (with much special pleading, to my mind) by R. C. Petry, in “The Social Character of Heavenly Beatitude, According to the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas,” *The Thomist* 7 (1944): 65–79. A more robust approach is taken by James McEvoy, “The Other as Oneself: Friendship and Love in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas,” in James McEvoy and Michael Dunne, eds., *Thomas Aquinas: Approaches to Truth* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2002), pp. 16–37.

9. Cf. Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, viii, 25.

10. Lombard, *IV Sent.*, dist. xlix, cap. 3 (282), 3, in *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, ii, 552; tr. Silano, iv, 269.

11. Of course, this is purely hypothetical. No such improvement is possible, since the hierarchical disposition of the Heavenly Paradise is fixed forever.

We are all members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ, the Pearl maiden continues (457–68). Just as there is no “hate” or “gawle” (hatred or bitterness) between the members of one’s own body, so that the head does not resent the arm or finger being adorned with a ring, in the same way we all behave “wyth luf and lyste” (with love and joy) toward our fellow queens and kings of heaven.

Augustine had used a similar body metaphor to explain how the blessed are incapable of feeling jealous of each other:

No one will wish to have what he has not received, and he will be bound in a bond of uttermost peace to one who has received it; just as, in the body, the finger does not wish to be the eye, since both members are contained within the ordered composition of the whole body.¹²

A fuller, and particularly influential, formulation was produced by Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033–1109) and his circle. Indeed, it is probably correct to say that Anselm was the thinker responsible for the single most influential account of postmortem community to have been produced in the High Middle Ages. His ideas found favor with thinkers as different as the great Franciscan master St. Bonaventure (d. 1274) and the divisive *doctor evangelicus* John Wyclif (d. 1384); here is a fascinating instance of how aspects of monastic theology could be retained and redeployed within scholasticism. In the collection of Anselm’s discourses that was compiled by his secretary Alexander of Canterbury (fl. 1100–1109), it is explained that all the members of the human body “havyth bytwene hem ful gret acordynge to gadere” (here I follow the fifteenth-century Middle English translation).¹³ The feet continue to work for the whole body even though they may “be hurte and blede throw scharpe thornis and stonys.” Similarly, the hand will not refuse to work for the body because it is wounded, and even if “the honde make a wounde in the fote with an axe” the foot is not moved to anger against the hand,

for they beth so yknytte to gedere with acordynge of love that they may not discordye bytwene hem silf by no maner weye, for that that is do to eny of hem, hit is do to eche of hem.¹⁴

12. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, xxii.30, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 1179. Cf. the cogent discussion by Kevin Marti, “Traditional Characteristics of the Resurrected Body in *Pearl*,” *Viator* 24 (1993): 311–35, pp. 318–19.

13. *De quatuordecim partibus beatitudinis, The Fourteen Parts of Blessedness: Chapter 5 of the Dicta Anselmi*, ed. Avril Henry and D. A. Trotter (Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1994), p. 102.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 102–3.

Such superlative amity will also be a feature of our future paradise—where no lesser form of loving *concordia* is to be expected.

This schal the acordynge be in thylke blessed contrey of hevyn, where schal no filthe of dissension be founde, whare God schal be sovereyn abofe al, and ilovyd most of hem alle abofe al other; for in certeyn, lasse a concorde schal noȝt be had amonge seyntys of God, weche beth Cristis membris, than is founde in the corruptibile body of men that lyveyth here in eorthe, but hit schal be mucche bettur and more precious whan hit is ste\al/bilid, for hit schal nevere have ende.¹⁵

These Anselmian ideas feature prominently in that most popular of all Middle English poems, *The Prick of Conscience*, including its account of the second type of happiness that blessed souls and bodies (reunited after the General Resurrection) will experience, namely “frendschepe and parfyte love.” This is far superior to anything that can be experienced here on earth, and it will never fail but last forever, because

. . . als ilka lym of a body
Lufes alle þe other lym kyndely,
And yhernes, ay, gretly þair hele,
Swa parfyte þat luf salle be and lele;
Ffor þai salle alle be of ane assent
And of a wille and of ane entent;
Ffor þai salle be þan alle als a body
In sere lym, and als a saule anely;
And God þair heved salle be þare,
þat salle þam luf als mykelle or mare,
Als dose þe heved of þe body þat loves
þe lym kyndely þat on it moves. (8377–98)^{16, 17}

However, even this forceful discourse is transcended in the claim—made in the *Dicta Anselmi* and also featuring prominently in Anselm’s *Proslogion*¹⁸—that the *concordia sanctorum* is such that one blessed soul is gladdened by

15. Ibid., p. 103.

16. *The Pricke of Conscience (Stimulus conscientiae)*, ed. Richard Morris (Berlin: Asher, 1863), p. 226.

17. Cf. *Proslogion*, chap. 25, trans. M. J. Charlesworth in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and Gillian Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998; rpt. 2008), p. 102.

18. *De quatuordecim partibus beatitudinis*, ed. Henry and Trotter, p. 109.

the happiness experienced by another; “each will rejoice for every other as for himself” in that place “where no one will love another less than himself.”

In certeyn, 3if hit were so, that eny man that thou lovyst as muche as thou dost thy silf had that blessidnys that is aforesaid, than thy joye schuld be dowbelyd ther throw, for thou woldist be as glad of hys joye as thow woldist of thyn owen blisse; and if hit were so, that tweyn, or thre, or many mo of thy frendys had the same joye and blissydny, and if thou lovedist eche of hem as muche as thy silf, thou woldys have as muche gladnys for everych of hem as thou woldist have for thysilf.¹⁹

This ability to wish a friend more joy than he or she already has is quite reminiscent of the Pearl maiden’s statement that she and her heavenly companions take pleasure in other souls’ enjoyment, and indeed desire that they should have even more. (*The Prick of Conscience* places a somewhat different emphasis, on the notion that blessed souls will know each other and “fele other mens ioy als þair awen” in that place where “mare ioy and blys moght never be,” that is, where happiness is so great that it cannot be any better.)²⁰ And I believe it underlies Peter Lombard’s assertion (as quoted above) that “each will rejoice in another’s good as much as he would rejoice if he had it in himself.”

Powerful words indeed. However, none of these arguments may be taken as meaning that “the joy of all shall be equal,” as the Lombard makes quite clear. For such a claim would mean that “the blessedness of all is equal,” a line of reasoning that must be rejected. Peter resolves the matter by declaring that the joy of the blessed does not imply an equality of knowledge, and therefore “parity of joy will not bring about parity of blessedness.”²¹ His commentators emphasized that the Beatific Vision of God will not be experienced by all the blessed in equal measure.

In *Pearl* this issue is addressed in a particularly acute form, through an extensive retelling of the Parable of the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1–16). Here Christ likens the kingdom of heaven to the situation in which a householder gives all his laborers the same reward of one penny, even though some have “borne the burden of the day and the heats” while others have entered the vineyard only “about the eleventh hour” (20:12, 9). The Pearl maiden, who obviously belongs within the group of latecomers, ardently justifies her penny on

19. *Pricke of Conscience*, lines 8609–12, ed. Morris, p. 232.

20. Lombard, *IV Sent.*, dist. xlix, cap. 3 (282), 3, in *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, ii, 552; trans. Silano, iv, 269–70.

21. Carleton F. Brown, “The Author of *The Pearl*, Considered in the Light of His Theological Opinions,” *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 19.1 (1904): 115–45, pp. 140, 145.

the grounds that there is no question of “more and less” in God’s kingdom (601–2). God is no niggard; so abundant is his grace that infants who die shortly after their baptism are welcomed into the vineyard and will receive their reward in full.

Some of the poem’s modern readers have wondered if, at this point, it is indeed advocating an equality of heavenly reward. Carleton Brown suspected that the *Pearl* poet, relying on his allegedly “evangelical” interpretation of the biblical text, ventured “to reject the casuistries of scholastic theology” and, at least in this respect, offered “a most interesting and remarkable anticipation of sixteenth-century Protestantism.”²² Presumably Brown had in mind the theocentric heaven envisaged by the Protestant reformers, in accordance with which “eternal life” is seen “primarily as the individual’s unsurpassed communion with God.”²³ Thus John Calvin read the Parable of the Vineyard in predestinarian terms, as an illustration of the way in which God awards equal reward for unequal labor, and as a refutation of any notion of the righteousness of works.²⁴ Calvin remarks that each person will receive a special reward,²⁵ but that does not mean that a hierarchical structure of reward (as per the Roman Catholic model) is in place. Furthermore, because heavenly reward is dependent on a direct relationship between God and each and every man, the relationship those men have with each other, whether on earth or in heaven, is of little importance.

This must suffice as an attempt to elucidate Brown’s thinking. But already it is clear that there is nothing like that in *Pearl*. Rather, as I now hope to show, the poem’s treatment of the Parable of the Vineyard is quite consonant with a standard late-medieval interpretation of that passage, whereby the blessed are believed to share Our Father’s house and live in blissful fellowship within it, while accepting that it contains many mansions.

Once again a useful guide may be found in Peter Lombard, who provided successive generations of commentators with a means of contextualizing Matthew 20:1–16 and reconciling it with John 14:2 (“In my Father’s house there are many mansions”). Those “many mansions” refer to differences of reward in heaven, Peter explains. And yet, on the other hand, “all the elect shall have the same coin which the Head of the household gave to all who worked in the vineyard.” Here is his deft resolution of the apparent discrepancy.

22. McDannell and Lang, *Heaven*, p. 148.

23. Calvin, *Institutes*, iii.18, 3. Interestingly, here Calvin places considerable weight on Prosper of Aquitaine’s *De vocatione omnium gentium*, i.17, applying it for his own purpose.

24. *Ibid.*, iii.25, 10.

25. *IV Sent.*, dist. xlix, cap. 1 (280), 2, in *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, ii, 548–49; trans. Silano, iv, 266.

By this term coin is understood something which is common to all the elect, namely eternal life—God Himself, whom all will enjoy, but unequally. Indeed, just as there will be different degrees of brightness in each body, so also of glory in each soul. *For star shall differ from star*, that is, elect from elect, *in brightness* of mind and body [cf. 1 Cor. 15:41]. Indeed, some shall contemplate God's beauty more closely and with greater clarity, and this very difference in contemplation is called a diversity of mansions. And so the house is one, that is, the coin is one, but there is a diversity of mansions in it, that is, a difference of glory [*claritas*]. The highest good, blessedness, and life of all, is one and the same—namely God Himself. All the elect shall enjoy this good, but some more fully than others.²⁶

To draw on St. Thomas's relevant discussion, all those who enter the kingdom of heaven share the "essential" or "common" reward, which is beatitude itself.²⁷ But, as Aquinas emphasizes, this is quite compatible with differences in the rewards which add to the glory of beatitude—such as, we may add, the aureole of virginity with which the Pearl maiden has been crowned, this being one indicator (among many) that the poet is acutely aware of the hierarchical organization of heaven. The blessed may be equal inasmuch as all of them are beatified, but some are more equal than others in respect of higher reward and the extent to which they participate in beatitude. Being awarded the aureole of virginity, crowned a queen in heaven, does not mean that the maiden has

26. *In IV Sent.*, dist. xlix, qu. 5, art. 1; *S. Thomae Aquinatis opera omnia* (Parma, 1852–72), <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/snp40495.html> (accessed July 5, 2012).

27. Cf. the partial summary of the Latin text by Robert Easting, *Visions of the Other World in Middle English* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 70–71; the Middle English version is summarized on pp. 74–75. The tale is set in Cork, and said to be the work of one Marcus, an Irish Benedictine monk from Cashel, who had moved to the Cistercian house of St. James in Regensburg. Nigel Palmer, whose study concentrates on the Dutch and German translations, lists 154 surviving Latin manuscripts, in addition to many adaptations and extracts. Of particular importance is the abridgment by the Cistercian monk Helinand of Froidmont (c. 1160—after 1229), which was known to Vincent of Beauvais and adapted in his *Speculum historiale*. See Nigel Palmer, "Visio Tnugdali": *The German and Dutch Translations and Circulation in the Later Middle Ages*, *Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*, 76 (Munich: Artemis, 1982), pp. 19–20. On the magnificent illuminated version of a French translation which was made c. 1470 for Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy (now Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS 30), see Thomas Kren and Roger S. Wieck, *The Visions of Tondal from the Library of Margaret of York* (Malibu, CA: Getty Museum, 1990), and Thomas Kren (ed.), *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion, and the Visions of Tondal: Papers delivered at a Symposium organized by the Department of Manuscripts of the J. Paul Getty Museum in collaboration with the Huntington Library and Art Collections, June 21–24, 1990* (Malibu, CA: Getty Museum, 1992).

usurped the position rightly occupied by the Virgin Mary—this idea, as stumblingly suggested by her father, quite horrifies her.

“Cortayse quen,” þenne sayde þat gaye,
 Knelande to grounde, folde vp hyr face,
 “Makelez moder and myriest may,
 Blessed bygynner of vch a grace!”
 Þenne ros ho vp and con restay,
 And speke me towarde in þat space:
 “Sire, fele here porchasez and fongez pray,
 Bot supplantorez none withinne þys place;
 Þat emperise al heuenz hatz—
 And vrþe and helle—in her bayly;
 Of erytage 3et non wyl ho chace,
 For ho is quen of cortaysye.” (433–44)

Mary is *the* queen of “cortaysye” (the term denoting both aristocratic courtesy and divine grace), with all earth and heaven in her dominion (433–42); no one can, or would attempt to, supplant her. Her position as “emperise” is unchallenged. Some enjoy God more perfectly than the Pearl maiden possibly can, and she knows it—“makelez quene’ [matchless queen] þenne sade I not” (784). The point is rather that she is more than contented with her lot. The Virgin Mary does not begrudge the reward that the Pearl maiden is enjoying, even as she herself enjoys much more. And such is the extent of *amicitia* and *concordia* in this jewel-box of a heaven that the maiden can wish that the crowns of her familiars were five times as precious.

What, then, of the relationship between heavenly and earthly societies—indeed, is there one? In *Pearl*, family values are not singled out for a special merit-award in heavenly society. This is in intriguing contrast with what happens in that most popular of all late-medieval visionary texts, the *Visio Tnugdali* (dated 1149 by the author of the Latin original), which enjoyed a quite astonishing dissemination, both in its original form (together with several Latin adaptations) and in its many translations—at least forty-three in fifteen languages, including French, Dutch, German, Icelandic, and English. This recounts how a powerful but cruel Irish nobleman—variously named “Tnugdalus,” “Tunaldus,” or (as in the Middle English translation I will follow here) “Tundale”²⁸—is shown the error of his ways. Having being led through the

28. *The Vision of Tundale*, lines 2135–48, in *Three Purgatory Poems*, ed. Edward E. Foster (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2004), pp. 247–48. This account goes beyond the original Latin; *Visio Tnugdali: Lateinisch und Altdeutsch*, ed. Albrecht Wagner (Erlangen: Deichert,

pains of hell and the pleasures of heaven by an angel, finally Tundale experiences a brief glimpse of the Holy Trinity and witnesses angels basking in the radiance of the face of God,²⁹ before being ejected because he—far from being a holy virgin—is unworthy to dwell there.

One of the strangest regions of the paradise visited by Tundale is protected by an elaborately adorned silver wall, which lacks any door. However, some divine power leads him beyond it, to a “full delyttabull place / fulle of murthe and solace,” where “mony a mon and woman,” wearing clothes which were “precyows and new, / As whytte as snow that ever dyd snaw,” sing “muryly” in praise of God (1757–58, 1767–68).³⁰ They are a quite jolly lot, “joyfull and blythe ynogh,” making merry and laughing (1769–70). Tundale’s guide identifies them as the souls of the faithfully married, who stayed true to one another without committing adultery, ruling their families well and being liberal in their almsgiving.

“This joy,” quod the angyl bryght,
 “Hathe God ordeynyd for weddyd men ryght
 That levon in cleyne maryage
 And keputhe hor bodys from owtrage,
 And for hom that hor guddys gevin
 Too the pore that in myscheff levyn,
 And for hom that techon dylygenly
 Hor sogettus to lovyn God allmyghty
 And chastyn hom aftur hor myght
 When they don wrong and lyffe not right,
 And for hom that Holy Chyrche honowrys
 And mayntenyth hom and sockors.” (1787–96)³¹

At the Last Judgment, continues the angel, God will welcome these souls into his kingdom, as a father welcomes his blessed children (1797–802). Deeply

1882), pp. 52–53. Earlier in the Latin text, it was made clear that Tundale may not be among those souls who enjoy the presence of the Holy Trinity; cf. *Visio Tnugdali*, ed. Wagner, p. 49. The Middle English poet does translate that passage (lines 1945–54; pp. 242–43) but subsequently seems to ignore its significance.

29. *The Vision of Tundale*, ed. Foster, pp. 237–38.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

31. This is a text in which a special place in paradise is set aside for the Irish kings Cantaber (Conor O’Brien) and Donatus (Donough MacCarthy), together with the renowned Cormake (Cormac MacCarthy), who is especially well known to Tundale. It is true that all of them have some suffering left to do, but their future total happiness seems assured. An instance of local nepotism, extending even up to heaven?

impressed, Tundale asks to be allowed to remain in this place, but the angel refuses; they have other places to visit and other souls to see, those of saints who are enjoying even greater rewards. But there is no doubt of the author's high valuation of law-abiding marriage.

The many ways in which the *Visio Tnugdali* diverges from standard theological accounts of the Other World has often been noted; here is "vernacular theology" of a quite distinctive kind—presumably due, in some measure, to its Celtic origins.³² But the extent of that divergence should not be exaggerated, inasmuch as its fundamental realization of paradisaic pleasures and hellish torments has obvious affinities with more traditional fare. And in a chronicle written around the middle of the fourteenth century by the Dominican Henry of Hereford, we read that Pope John XXII—who controversially claimed that blessed souls do not enjoy full Beatific Vision until they reach the *patria*—regarded the *Visio Tnugdali* as a genuine divinely sent vision, and one that (rather conveniently) confirmed his own views.³³ Indeed, according to Henry, Pope John, on having heard of Tundale's escapades, himself experienced in a dream the very same vision. As a record of an event in the pope's life, this account is hardly believable, but as a record of how at least one learned friar could reconcile an eccentric, populist text with abstruse scholastic speculation, it is quite compelling. For a moment at least, the distinctions usually drawn between high-cultural intellectual analysis and the telling of tales cease to matter. But the *Visio Tnugdali*'s elevation of faithful marriage to a heavenly location remains unusual, to say the least, irrespective of the perspective within which it is placed.

Family values also enjoy a (brief) moment of glory in canto 14 of Dante's *Paradiso*, where the General Resurrection is confidently anticipated. Solomon looks forward to the time when he, and the other souls in the sphere of the sun, will be joyously reunited with their own bodies—and also, perhaps, witness the happiness of others.

. . . che ben mostrar disio d'i corpi morti:
forse non pur per lor, ma per le mamme,
per li padre e per li altri che fuor cari
anzi che fosser sempiterne fiamme. (*Paradiso*, XIV, 63–66)

[. . . Truly they showed desire for their dead bodies—perhaps not only for

32. See Palmer, *Visio Tnugdali*, pp. 22–23.

33. Dante Alighieri: *The Divine Comedy: Paradiso, Text and Commentary*, ed. and trans. Charles S. Singleton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 156–57.

themselves, but also for their mothers, for their fathers, and for the others who were dear before they [i.e., the saints] became eternal flames.]³⁴

That is to say, these saints and scholars may be envisaging the joy that their loved ones will experience when they receive their blessed bodies. The emphasis is on the shared nature of this future glorification, as parents and children are reunited, friends with friends—and they will know each other, since (in accord with standard resurrection theology) their bodies will be recognizable, their identities distinct.³⁵ That all-important *forse* (“perhaps,” “maybe”) keeps this thought, precisely speaking, within the realm of the tentative. But its power is undiminished. The inconvenient truth that not all those “others who were dear” may achieve beatitude is quietly ignored, as Dante enables the future *societas amicorum* to be imagined as a big family get-together.³⁶

The contrast with *Pearl* is striking. The Middle English poem follows the scholastic line that, in the land beyond death—in heaven and subsequently in the *patria*—familial ties and merely human affections of love (including friendship) count for little if anything in terms of status and happiness. But of course, good deeds will always be liable for reward, irrespective of the social context within which they are performed, and this principle includes the family situation. And it is important to note that our feelings for family and friends are not necessarily erased in the other world. Even though in a heaven of disembodied souls the human memory cannot function (for it needs a body to function), the intellect—where knowledge resides—will survive death intact, and preserve what we might, speaking loosely, refer to as happy memories. Separated souls have knowledge of singulars, says Aquinas.

34. See further Ian Bishop, “Relatives at the Court of Heaven: Contrasted Treatments of an Idea in *Piers Plowman* and *Pearl*,” in *Medieval Literature and Antiquities: Studies in Honour of Basil Cottle*, ed. Myra Stokes and T. L. Burton (Cambridge: Brewer, 1987), pp. 111–18.

35. It would be quite reductive, and historically inaccurate, to see here a poet infusing a measure of human warmth (or whatever emotionalizing phrase one prefers to use here) into stern scholastic doctrine. For on many occasions scholastic doctrine concerning the *patria* itself admits a measure of human warmth, in part due to its monastic heritage (as illustrated above) but also because of the Aristotelian theories of epistemology and psychology in which the schoolmen invested so heavily, thought-systems that afforded considerable value to sense perception in the processes of gaining and using knowledge. Conversely, when writing about the other world, late-medieval poets—the *Pearl* poet being an obvious example—could be as rigorous as the sternest of schoolmen. Some discussion of those large issues is included in my monograph *From Eden to Eternity: Creations of Paradise in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming).

36. *Summa theologiae*, 1a, qu. 89, art. 8, resp. (xii, 160–63). See further John Wippel, “Thomas Aquinas on the Separated Soul’s Natural Knowledge,” in McEvoy and Dunne, eds., *Aquinas: Approaches to Truth*, pp. 114–40.

nas, “by being made somehow determinate with respect to them, whether by a vestige of previous knowledge (*cognitio*) or affection (*affectio*), or by divine dispensation”; he finds it highly unlikely that they are “ignorant of things that happen among the living on earth.”³⁷ Such knowledge, one may infer, remains with those souls when, joyously reunited with their bodies, they enter the *patria*. Aquinas and his fellow theologians were fond of quoting Abraham’s words to Dives in Hell, “Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime” (Luke 16:25), which they took as evidence that souls were indeed aware of good (and bad) experiences from their days on earth.³⁸ (One complication: as a divine kindness a saint’s memory of his sins may be obliterated, or at least removed of the power to hurt—this issue was raised by Peter Lombard, and the subject of some debate.)³⁹

All of that having been said, heaven is a foreign country, and they do things differently there. *Pearl* is adamant about that. When the bereaved father tries to treat his daughter as a little girl (who, he worries, cannot possibly have deserved the heavenly reward she now claims to be enjoying), she responds in a lofty manner, even evincing some surprise at her interlocutor’s earthly obtuseness. Sir, she tells him brusquely, you have “your tale mysetente,” mis-told your tale (257). Quite evidently, the child is now father of the man; this precious pearl belongs with the prince of heaven, rather with her uncomprehending parent. Their communication gap marks a clear division between earth and heaven. The Pearl maiden has no special favors to offer her relative; in her heaven there is no mansion set aside for family occupation. Unlike the first-person narrators of the *Visio Tnugdali* and *Comedia*, the Dreamer remains on his side of the paradisaal river, granted only a brief glimpse of his daughter’s eternal happiness rather than an extensive tour of the other world. Before he can traverse that very real barrier he must taste death. His “corse in clot mot calder keve” (his body must go down, colder than it is now, into clay),

“For hit watz forgarte at paradys greue;
Oure 3orefader⁴⁰ hit con mysse3eme.

37. Aquinas’s own discussion is at *Summa theologiae*, 1a, qu. 89, art. 6 (xii, 154–59).

38. *IV Sent.*, dist. xliii, cap. 5 (248), in *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, ii, 513–14; trans. Silano, pp. 236–37.

39. That is, Adam, who in the Garden of Eden brought the human body to ruin. As a consequence, each and every man must endure dire death before the Lord will allow him to cross this water.

40. Another possible influence might be the river Acheron of pagan mythology, across which Charon transported the shades of the dead into the underworld, which medieval Christians knew about from book VI of Virgil’s *Aeneid*. It appears in Dante’s *Inferno*, Canto III, as the river across which “wicked souls” are ferried to Hell, “into eternal darkness, into fire and cold”

Purȝ drwry deth boz vch man dreue,
 Er over þys dam hym Dryȝtyn deme." (321–24)

Having dreamed his way back into a simulacrum of that lost paradise, an Edenic garden, the bereaved father figure looks across its banks to what he actually calls a "Paradyse." The water seems to be a "deuyse" (division) made "bytwene myrþez" (between joys), firmly separating one place of pleasure from the other (137–40).

This uncrossable stream might be intended to recall one of the rivers of Eden. Or, as is more likely, I believe, it alludes to the "river of water of life, clear as crystal," which Apocalypse 22:1 describes as "proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (and is specifically mentioned at *Pearl*, 1055–60;⁴¹ this biblical passage may also lie behind the Well of Life in the *Visio Thugdali*). Apocalypse continues: "on both sides of the river, was the tree of life (*lignum vitae*), bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month: the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations" (22:2). The *Glossa ordinaria* emphasizes the differences between the two sides of the riverbank,⁴² in terms reminiscent of the *Pearl* poet's *devyse*. On one side of the river is this present life, where we are now—*in via*, on the road to glory. On the other side is the homeland of beatitude. Spiritual refreshment is available on both sides. Here we have the *lignum vitae*, that is, the body and blood of Christ, to revive us. There we have the presence of Christ Himself.⁴³ This very distinction is consolidated at the end of *Pearl*, when the Dreamer recognizes that he does not (at least not yet) belong in the "fayre regioun" (1178) on the other side of the river, with his beloved daughter and the "Prynce" Himself. What he does have, *in via*, is Christ in the form of bread and wine; the everyday wonder of

(84, 86–87), this being in marked contrast with the *Pearl* poet's river, which forms the border with his imaginations of the Heavenly Paradise.

41. *Biblia Sacra cum Glossa ordinaria et Postilla Nicolai Lyran*i (Venice: Apud Magnam Societatem, 1603), vi, cols. 1685–86. In contrast, the commentary of Nicholas of Lyre (d. 1349) stresses the similarities: the entire community of the blessed is refreshed and fed with the divine banquet on both sides of the river, and as its members come together in the middle of the street (col. 1685).

42. Here the *Glossa* draws on the Apocalypse commentaries of Berengaudus/Bernegaudus (fl. 840–92?) and St. Martin of Leon (d. 1203). Cf. the texts in *Patrologia Latina*, 17, col. 962C, and *Patrologia Latina*, 209, 413C–D. On the shadowy but highly influential Berengaudus, see Derk Visser, *Apocalypse as Utopian Expectation (800–1500): The Apocalypse Commentary of Berengaudus of Ferrières and the Relationship between Exegesis, Liturgy, and Iconography* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Visser offers his tentative conclusion regarding his author's dates on pp. 93–94.

43. This phrase appears frequently in addresses from parent to child in the late Middle Ages; see Norman Davis, "A Note on *Pearl*," *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 17 (1966): 403–5, and 18 (1967): 294.

transubstantiation. The bereaved father must rest content with that and leave his precious pearl in God's hands (literally, in God's blessing—and indeed in his own), confident in the knowledge that God has granted us the gift of being his trusted household servants, and precious pearls to use and reward as He wishes.

... to God I hit bytaʒte,
 In Krystez dere blessyng and myn,⁴⁴
 Þat in þe forme of bred and wyn
 Þe preste vus schewez vch a daye.
 He gef vus to be His homly hyne
 And precious perlez vnto His pay. (1207–12)

Thus *Pearl*, like “The Unquiet Grave,” advises patient acceptance of the transitory nature of all earthly things, until God calls the speaker away to his own death. In the meantime, the Dreamer has more life yet to live, many tests still to face. As he leaves us he seems indeed to have made himself content, to have attained a considerable measure of patience. Pleasing the heavenly prince and being reconciled to Him is, he now claims, “full eþe”—very easy—for the good Christian. The reference is to good Christians in general. For his part, the Dreamer has found Him, “boþe day and naʒte,” “A God, A Lorde, a frende ful fyin” [fine, perfect] (1201–4). There is no complacency, and certainly no arrogance, in those words—rather we hear the voice of a man who has well-founded faith in a “Lorde” who keeps his promises.

44. This remark has struck David Aers as “stunning” and “strange,” “theologically superficial and psychologically superficial.” Indeed, he finds here an “act of defiant rebellion” symptomatic of that “competitive individualism” endemic in earthly courts and which, throughout the poem, has served as a barrier to the Dreamer’s comprehension of the Maiden’s teaching. See “The Self Mourning: Reflections on *Pearl*,” *Speculum* 68.1 (1993): 54–73 (esp. pp. 71–73). In Aers’s reading, the Dreamer has tenaciously and aggressively asserted his memories of his daughter as a little girl, of the time when he held the dominant paternal/patriarchal position. This figure has been unable to shrug off “a fantasy of total possession,” the desire for an exclusive reunion and a life with her alone, all of which is in sharp conflict with the doctrines of Christian community and the communion of Saints. Only in the last few verses of the poem—too little too late, in Aers’s view—do we have any acknowledgment of the Church and its supreme sacrament, the Eucharist. However, it may be noted that while the heavenly community presented in *Pearl* is uncompetitive, it is certainly not a place of equal shares. All its inhabitants enjoy the reward of salvation but are distinguished by the various degrees of merit they have earned and the various degrees of participation in the Beatific Vision they enjoy. Here is a hierarchy far more complicated, more finely tuned in the specificity of its differentiating details, than any parallel in the present world. So, to that extent, individualism, or at least individual (and individuating) possession of merit and reward, exists in heaven as it does on earth, though the heavenly version functions more smoothly, given that it is free from aggression and rivalry, every soul accepting its rank without rancor.

Of course, others have read *Pearl*, and the significance of its unquiet grave, quite differently.

There is nothing unquiet about her [the Pearl maiden's] death and when she returns it is not as a disturbed spirit. The Jeweller, in contrast, is a ghostly figure; unable to leave his lost pearl, he haunts her. . . . The bereft Jeweller's existence before his death is one of aimless drifting through a world devoid, for him, of meaning and substance, a living death.⁴⁵

Thus Jane Gilbert, whose response is both cogent and affecting. However, I myself would place greater emphasis on the everyday wonder of eucharistic transubstantiation, which is no small thing. Its availability on the Jeweler's side of the river ensures that he need not suffer a living death; thus at the poem's end there is no evidence of a world devoid of meaning and substance. Rather the Dreamer is presented as a wayfarer on the pilgrimage of life, a journey with clear directions and a known destination, the state of glory. This poem may begin with a grief-stricken father who is drifting aimlessly, but it proceeds to offer a vision of life beyond death—a life not only of the soul but also of the body, wherein flesh and spirit reunite. The grave is unquiet inasmuch as the body it holds desires to return to the soul that once animated it, even as the soul wants to rejoin its beloved body and no other (which may be likened to the way in which a man desires his beloved woman and no other, according to St. Bonaventure's discussion of the Resurrection).⁴⁶

Dante configures the future *societas amicorum* as a reunion of friends and family. The *Pearl* poet does something rather different, and more obviously in keeping with certain doctrines of the kind dismissed by Carleton Brown as "the casuistries of scholastic theology." He dramatizes how the earthly bond of father and daughter is *superseded* by the generalized hierarchical relationships of the heavenly community, which cannot allow the exclusive intimacy that two people may achieve in this present life. But—according to standard resurrection theology, theology of a type which I believe permeates the poem—something much better is in prospect, the *renovatio* in the *patria* of all that is good about earthly existence. One of *Pearl*'s crucial points is that heavenly love and friendship are far superior to anything possible on the old earth—and the conviction that the resurrection body (anticipated by the mature and

45. Jane Gilbert, *Living Death in Medieval French and English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 151.

46. *In IV Sent.*, dist. xliii, art. 1, qu. 5, conclusio, in *S. Bonaventurae opera omnia* (Quaracchi: Ad Claras Aquas, 1882–1902), iv, 893–94. On this fascinating passage see Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 237, 243–44.

glorious appearance of the Pearl maiden) will have an ample share of such pleasures, strongly reinforces that message. The fact of the General Resurrection—a nonnegotiable tenet of Christian belief—ensures that in the final analysis we cannot speak of an “extremist Christian opposition between corporeal and spiritual life.”⁴⁷ For in the future homeland, the paradise beyond death, the Pearl maiden will take on material form—looking not unlike she does in the Jeweler’s dream, one may imagine, but now more substantial than the stuff that dreams are made on.

Pearl offers a quite robust response to that desire for the postmortem persistence of family ties that has been such an abiding component of popular narrative and theological speculation alike. Yet it is movingly confident that, given the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, the Dreamer may hope that one day he will see his daughter again.

47. Gilbert, *Living Death*, p. 151.

Mercantile Gentility in Cambridge, University Library MS Ff.2.38

MICHAEL JOHNSTON

As many medievalists would attest, the nature of gentility was a hotly debated question in the later Middle Ages: is it innate, concomitant with aristocratic blood? Or can it manifest itself in anyone by virtue of their gentle behavior?¹ As Bonnie Mak has recently shown, Buonaccorso da Montemagno's humanist debate poem about the sources of gentility, the *Controversia de nobilitate*, enjoyed a pan-European circulation.² Among vernacular best sellers, the topic was treated by Dante in his *Convivio* and in the *Roman de la rose*. In England, in particular, numerous romances, catechetical literature, courtesy books, and sermons reflected at length on the question of gentility, with romances coming down most often on the side of the feudal aristocracy, suggesting that indeed gentle behavior is a birthright, closed off to the vast majority of the population.³ By contrast, in what is the most famous

1. For an overview of some of the literature intervening in these debates, see *Medieval Conduct*, ed. Kathleen Ashley and Robert L. A. Clark, Medieval Cultures 29 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Jonathan Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy: Medieval Courtesy Books and the Gawain-Poet* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Brewer, 1985); Diane Bornstein, *Mirrors of Courtesy* (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1975); and Phillipa Hardman, "Popular Romances and Young Readers," in *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, ed. Raluca Radulescu and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: Brewer, 2009), pp. 150–64.

2. Mak, *How the Page Matters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

3. For an analysis of the feudal-aristocratic ideology animating most Middle English romances, see Stephen Knight, "The Social Function of the Middle English Romances," in David Aers, ed., *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History* (New York: St. Martin's, 1986), pp. 99–122. As one particular example, one might cite the fair unknown motif, which posits a dependence of gentle behavior on noble birth, as seen in romances such as, *inter alia*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, Thomas Malory's "Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney," *Sir Degaré*, *Sir Percevyll of*

Middle English disquisition on the subject, the old hag in Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale insists that gentility and birth are not directly related.⁴ In his lyric "Gentilesse," Chaucer himself attempts the uncoupling of virtue and blood when he proclaims, "For unto vertu longeth dignitee / And noght the reverse" (5–6).⁵ The source and nature of gentility was thus an open question.

I wish here to explore one hitherto understudied moral exemplum from the period and its intervention into these debates. As I will show, "A Good Matter of the Merchant and His Son" (hereafter, "A Good Matter"), which survives in one copy from the late fifteenth century, registers a pointed and partisan critique of the dominant paradigm from romance, in which gentility was connected to landowning, aristocratic status, instead carving out an alternative cultural space for a specifically mercantile gentility.⁶ The moral exemplum to which I here turn adopts one particularly powerful strategy for staking a claim to gentility, attempting to show generosity as innate and reflexive: giving without reckoning the costs and without first pausing to calculate marks one as a gentle person, and such an attitude, the exemplum maintains, is constitutive of mercantile society.⁷

Gales, and *Ipomadon*. See James Simpson, "Violence, Narrative and Proper Name: *Sir Degaré*, 'The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney,' and the *Folie Tristan d'Oxford*," in Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert, eds., *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance* (Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education, 2000), pp. 122–41.

4. Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* III.1105–76. All quotations from Chaucer are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

5. See Thomas D. Hill, "Adam, 'The First Stocke,' and the Political Context of Chaucer's 'Gentilesse,'" in "Seyd in Forme and Reverence": *Essays on Chaucer and Chaucerians in Memory of Emerson Brown, Jr.*, ed. T. L. Burton and John F. Plummer (Provo, Utah: Chaucer Studio, 2005), pp. 145–50.

6. *A New Index of Middle English Verse*, ed. Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards (London: British Library, 2005), no. 1909. For an edition, see "The Merchant and His Son," in *Nugae Poeticae: Select Pieces of Old English Popular Poetry, Illustrating the Manners and Arts of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. James Orchard Halliwell (London: John Russell Smith, 1844), pp. 21–36. A similar narrative, known as "The Child of Bristowe," also survives from the same period: *A New Index of Middle English Verse*, no. 1157. For an edition, see *The Child of Bristowe: A Legend of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. F. J. Child (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1886). Barbara Hanawalt, "'The Childe of Bristowe' and the Making of Middle-Class Adolescence," in Barbara Hanawalt and David Wallace, eds., *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 155, aptly refers to these two texts as versions of Horatio Alger stories. For an analysis of both stories in light of late-medieval English literary culture writ large, see Roger A. Ladd, *Antimerchantism in Late Medieval English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 119–25.

7. For a general treatment of largesse and aristocratic ideals, see Marian Whitney, "Queen of Mediaeval Virtues: Largesse," in *Vassar Mediaeval Studies: By Members of the Faculty of Vassar College*, ed. Christabel Forsyth Fiske (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1923), pp. 183–215; Gervase Mathew, "Ideals of Knighthood in Late Fourteenth-Century England,"

At the same time, this exemplum does not merely pit its mercantile ideals against landed aristocracy writ large. Instead, its scapegoat is a franklin. Franklins were, by contemporary definition, those who were born free of servile status, and who owned land, but whose possessions were insufficient for them to be counted among the gentry. In short, they occupied the lowest rungs of landed society.⁸ By presenting franklins as the foil to mercantile gentility, “A Good Matter” thus targets the lower echelons among late-medieval landowners. As such, this exemplum offers not so much an inflection of class conflict in general as it does a narrow and specific iteration of mercantile anxieties—anxieties registered against their most proximate class competitors from the landed realm. This narrative has no truck with ethical ambiguity and the fuzzy borders of social class, instead leaving us in no doubt: merchants are right and franklins are wrong.

There are three main characters in this narrative: a Franklin; his son, William; and a guild master. The text begins with the Franklin, who enjoys a wealthy lifestyle on his landed estates. He lives by treachery, extorting money from his tenants and neighbors. By contrast, his son, William, refuses to study law and follow in his father’s footsteps as a landowner, instead going to the city to learn a trade and become a merchant. When his father dies, William inherits his lands—and along with them a host of neighbors and tenants pressing claims against the new heir. His father’s spirit, now completely black and in Purgatory, visits William to inform him that he cannot be released from suffering until his debts have been paid. William obligingly sells all his lands, satisfies his franklin-father’s debts, and is visited once again by the ghost. Now, his deceased franklin-father is less black than he was before; but he tells William that he will not turn white until William also pays his tithes. Since William has already sold all his lands, his only recourse is to sell himself

in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke*, ed. R. W. Hunt, W. A. Pantin, and R. W. Southern (Oxford: Clarendon, 1948), pp. 354–62; Britton Harwood, “Gawain and the Gift,” *PMLA* 106.3 (1991): 483–99; and Felicity Heal, “Reciprocity and Exchange in the Late Medieval Household,” in Hanawalt and Wallace, eds., *Bodies and Disciplines*, pp. 179–98.

8. See Nigel Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), pp. 19–29; and Christine Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401–1499* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 43–46. Contemporary definitions of franklins stressed that they were free landholders lacking in aristocratic titles. For example, the *Promptorium parvulorum*, a fifteenth-century English–Latin dictionary, defines a franklin as a “libertinus.” See *Promptorium Parvulorum: The First English–Latin Dictionary*, ed. A. L. Mayhew, Early English Text Society, e.s., 102 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1908), p. 173. See also *MED*, s.v. “frank(e)lein”; and the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, s.v. “franclein,” <http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/franclein> (accessed January 23, 2013).

into lifetime servitude to his guild master in return for money. Having done all this, William now sees his father in heavenly glory. But when his guild master sees William in nothing but his shirt—he even gave away the rest of his clothes to pay off his father’s debts—he takes pity on him, returning all his father’s lands to him, giving him his daughter in marriage, and making him his heir. William’s good will, that is, influences his master, who releases all previous debts. And William’s father is similarly freed from his debts to God, payable in Purgatory. The narrative thus presents a hierarchy of goodwill, in which the merchant is the highest and the franklin the lowest.

Franklins were a logical choice for merchants’ competitors at the game of gentility. Merchants, as urban figures without access to the prestige of landed society, would have looked to the lower echelons of landholders as their immediate competitors for cultural prestige. To accomplish this potted experiment in class antagonism, “A Good Matter” carefully maintains the fiction (although it does become unraveled in places, as I show in my conclusion) that the landed economy and the mercantile economy are mutually exclusive. The wicked Franklin is associated with landowning, for “Hors and nete he had grete plenté” and he is said to have been “a grete tenement man, and ryche of londe and lede” (fol. 59rb).⁹ His neighbors are similarly rural, for he takes advantage of them, should he happen to “fynde hys neȝbu[r]s beste, eyȝer in corne or grasse” (fol. 59rb). Moreover, the Franklin encourages William to study law, a profession that could symbolize minor landowning in general, given the litigiousness that marked almost all land ownership and the centrality of the legal profession to the gentry.¹⁰ The Franklin is clearly not thinking in grandiose terms about William’s prospects, but rather he envisions his son being a man of influence in a very circumscribed locale, which would match the sphere of influence of the typical franklin: “Thou schalt be an apersey, my sone, in mylys ij or thre” (fol. 59v).¹¹ In short, the Franklin wants his son to replicate his own social status. But William rejects the Franklin’s career advice, substituting a metonym for urban life in its place: “A man of lawe, seyde Wyllyam, ‘That w[y]ll y neuyr bee! / I wolde lerne of marchandyse to passe ovyr

9. In what follows, I cite directly from the manuscript, preserving the scribe’s orthography. I have silently emended capitalization and word division, and I have added punctuation.

10. J. G. Bellamy, *Bastard Feudalism and the Law* (London: Routledge, 1989); Ian Rowney, “Arbitration in Gentry Disputes of the Later Middle Ages,” *History* 67 (1982): 367–76; and C. E. Moreton, *The Townshends and Their World: Gentry, Law, and Land in Norfolk, c. 1450–1551* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

11. *Apersey* is, I take it, a form of Middle English *apprise*, which the *MED* defines as “good reputation, renown, eminence, excellence.” See *MED*, s.v. “ap(p)rise” (n.(2)). The *MED*’s definitions suggest that this word is an abstract noun denoting the reputation itself and not the person who bears the reputation. However, in this case, it clearly refers to a person of eminence.

the see'" (fol. 59v). By juxtaposing these two forms of life, the text reveals the rural and urban economies to be in direct opposition.

As is typical with exempla, readers are not given accurate renderings of social life, replete with psychological depth and explorations of motivation. Instead, short snippets are meant to figure forth larger moral claims, much as individual still frames in a comic represent a series of actions and moral states. In this case, rural property disputes represent the conflict-ridden nature of rural land ownership. For example, as the Franklin nears his death, we learn that none of his neighbors is willing to serve as executor of his will:

He callyd to hym the gentylmen, the beste in that cuntre
 He prayed them wyth all hys herte hys executurs for to bee.
 When they come in hys presence they seyde hym schortly "Nay,"
 For they knewe full wele hys lyfe how he had leuyd many a day.
 Then he preyed other gode yomen and hys neyghburs alsoo
 They wolde hys executurs byn, and they seyde schortly "Noo,"
 For all the cuntrey knewe full wele and hyt wele vndurstode
 That wyth false extorcoun he had geten moche of hys gode. (fol. 60r)

Since the Franklin had extorted money from his neighbors, his executors would be saddled with fending off the many claims that would ensue upon his death, and thus the entire enterprise of minor landowning is called into question. To underscore its condemnation of minor landowning in general, "A Good Matter" notes that neither the gentlemen, the lowest-ranking members of the aristocracy, nor the yeomen, those just outside of the aristocracy, are willing to serve as the Franklin's executor. Between franklins, yeomen, and gentlemen, the text has covered all of the categories of minor landowning status.

Contrasting it with the quarrelsome nature of rural economics, the text valorizes the economic space of the city: when William goes to the guild master and asks that he buy his father's lands from him, for example, the guild master asks how much he wants for them. William asks for a thousand marks. The guild master's response runs counter to the stereotype of parsimonious merchants: he offers a thousand pounds—that is, one and a half times what William had asked for the lands, noting explicitly that he is giving more than was asked: "Thou schalt have more þen þyn askyng" (fol. 60v). He gives no reason for this, suggesting that it was solely motivated by generosity. In this text, then, we find what seems to be a straightforward and unabashedly partisan answer to the question of *gentillesse*: good will only arises in the world of the city, the arena of merchants.

The most striking example of merchants going beyond expectations in giving occurs when William returns to the guild master, having gone through all of the £1,000, plus all of the additional money he borrowed to pay off his father's outstanding tithes and debts. At first, the master is understandably dubious, charging William with squandering his money "at the dyse, vnthryfty felaws amonge," and insisting that "Trewly of me thou getyst no more, y holde the worse then wode" (fol. 61r-v). But William is able to assuage his master's concerns with such remarkable ease that one is left with an image of a guileless urban society, one motivated by unalloyed honesty and generosity:

He tolde hys maystyr all the case for hys fadur how he had done,
 The marchand blessyd hym therfore he was a gracyous sone.
 "He may blesse the tyme that thou was borne, to hym þou was so kynde,
 A man may seke now all Ynglonde or soche a frende he fynde;
 Wyllyam, y have a doghtyr feyre, and sche schall be thy wyfe,
 Y pray to God that ye may bothe wyth yoye lede togedur youre lyfe.
 All thy fadyr londys trewly now gyf y the ageyne,
 And thou schalt have all myn also, when Y am dedd, certeyne." (fol. 62v)

Nothing motivates the master overcoming his seemingly sound objections but William's telling him "all the case for hys fadur how he had done." Once William has revealed this to him, the master switches instantaneously from skepticism to overflowing generosity. He releases William from his previous contractual obligation of perpetual servitude, going so far as to offer his daughter and to return his father's lands to him. William's single act of good will motivates another act of good will, a chain reaction that redounds throughout mercantile society and marks the means of differentiating urban from landed economies.

The manuscript that preserves "A Good Matter" further underscores the partisan and mercantile affiliations of this text: Cambridge, University Library MS Ff.2.38 (hereafter CUL Ff.2.38), which contains the only surviving copy of "A Good Matter" (fols. 59r-63r), was created for an urban readership, one likely to be receptive to the exemplum's attempts to widen the circle of gentility beyond the landed.¹² This codex is well known for preserving numer-

12. For a facsimile of the manuscript, see *Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38*, intro. Frances McSparran and P. R. Robinson (London: Scholar, 1979), which lists the manuscript's contents on pp. xxi-xxv. On the provenance of CUL Ff.2.38 see, for example, Malcolm Parkes, "The Literacy of the Laity," in *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation, and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London: Hambledon, 1991), pp. 292-93, who argues that in this manuscript "we find a range of reading-matter to satisfy most of the practical and intellectual requirements of a 15th-century middle-class family." Frances McSparran, "Literary and Historical Significance of the Manuscript," in *Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38*,

ous Middle English romances—nine of them, in fact, making it the second-largest compendium of this genre, behind only the Auchinleck Manuscript. In addition to romances, it contains numerous devotional texts in Middle English, including *Pety Job*; lyrics on the penitential psalms, the seven deadly sins, and the seven sacraments; *vitae* of Mary Magdalene, Margaret, Thomas à Becket, and Katherine; moral exempla; and William Lychfield's *Complaint of God*, which, as Amy Appleford and Nicholas Watson have recently argued, exemplifies a particularly mercantile-inflected piety.¹³ CUL Ff.2.38 was likely produced for someone in the city of Leicester: *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* locates the scribe's dialect to the immediate vicinity of this city.¹⁴ Further confirmation of CUL Ff.2.38's Leicester production and provenance can be found in its connections to Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 61. The Ashmole manuscript has several texts that explicitly link it to this city; its scribe's dialect is likewise localizable to this region; and, as I recently discovered, both CUL Ff.2.38 and Ashmole 61 share a paper stock, suggesting that they were both produced within the same region.¹⁵ Finally, there is good evidence of an active book-production industry in late-medieval Leicester, both commercially and in the surrounding religious houses, thus supporting the possibility that this manuscript was made in Leicester for use in Leicester.¹⁶ As Felicity Riddy rightly notes, "The most obvious assumption is

likewise avers that the importance of CUL Ff.2.38 lies in the fact that "the contents as a whole provide a good index to the religious and literary tastes and preoccupations of the bourgeoisie in the late fifteenth century" (p. vii). See also *Moral Love Songs and Laments*, ed. Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 1998); Fein similarly notes that this manuscript was "designed for use in a middle-class household" (p. 303). A seventeenth-century marginal note on fol. 179v, largely damaged and thus illegible, mentions "They burgesys Sone," suggesting that this codex may have enjoyed urban readership from its inception until its purchase by John Moore in the seventeenth century.

13. Amy Appleford and Nicholas Watson, "Merchant Religion in Fifteenth-Century London: The Writings of William Litchfield," *Chaucer Review* 46.1–2 (2011): 203–22.

14. The scribe's dialect is LP 531, analyzed in Angus McIntosh, M. L. Samuels, and Michael Benskin, *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, 4 vols. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986), 3:244–45.

15. Michael Johnston, "Two Leicestershire Romance Codices: Cambridge, University Library MS Ff.2.38 and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 61," *Journal of the Early Book Society* 15 (2012): 85–100.

16. John Hinks, "The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Leicester," in *The Moving Market: Continuity and Change in the Book Trade*, ed. P. Isaac and B. McKay (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 2001), pp. 27–38; Teresa Webber, "Latin Devotional Texts and the Books of the Augustinian Canons of Thurgarton Priory and Leicester Abbey in the Late Middle Ages," in *Books and Collectors, 1200–1700: Essays Presented to Andrew Watson*, ed. James P. Carley and Colin G. C. Tite (London: British Library, 1997), pp. 27–41, and Webber, "The Books of Leicester Abbey," in *Leicester Abbey: Medieval History, Archaeology and Manuscript Studies*, ed. Joanna Story, Jill Bourne, and Richard Buckley (Leicester, UK: Leicester Archaeological and Historical Society, 2006), pp. 127–46.

that the manuscript was commissioned for urban domestic use from a local professional.”¹⁷

This manuscript certainly bears the mark of an urban readership, perhaps one we could label proto-bourgeois. Such readers were likely to be receptive to this moral exemplum, one in which gentility is transferred away from landed society and onto the world of merchants. CUL Ff.2.38 provides a title for this moral exemplum that offers a further clue to its urban-mercantile provenance: “here foloweth a gode mater of the marchand and hys sone” (fol. 59r). This is a misnomer, for the father in this tale is a franklin, not a merchant—the father even explicitly resists his son becoming a merchant. Why, then, does the title call the father a merchant? Perhaps the scribe, on creating this volume for a family of urban readers, was more intent on appealing to his patrons than on representing the text accurately. Or perhaps the title suggests that the hero’s *real* father—the one from whom he learns about liberality and the one whose goods and social identity he ultimately inherits—was indeed the Merchant, and not the wicked Franklin, with the title thereby embracing the narrative’s supersessionary logic.

Contextualizing Franklins in Middle English Literature

As Jill Mann puts it, “Franklins as a class do not figure in estates literature.”¹⁸ Since this is a relatively obscure social station, and since franklins are the primary antithesis to mercantile gentility in “A Good Matter,” a brief pause to consider the role of franklins in late-medieval literary culture is in order. In short, although franklins are extremely rare figures in Middle English literature, when they are invoked they represent the outer margins of gentility—specifically, gentility grounded in the ownership of land. This is, as I have outlined above, precisely how “A Good Matter” classes franklins. In all these cases, then, we see that franklins were useful figures for literary thought experiments exploring the boundaries of gentility.

Chaucer’s Franklin is the most famous, and most complex, representative of this social station. As is well known, the Franklin’s Tale participates in contemporary debates about gentility: both Aurelius and the philosopher of

17. Felicity Riddy, “Temporal Virginity and the Everyday Body: *Le Bone Florence of Rome* and Bourgeois Self-Making,” in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. Nicola McDonald (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2004), 197–216, p. 199.

18. Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire: The Literature of Social Classes and the “General Prologue” to the “Canterbury Tales”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 152.

Orléans operate on the belief that gentility can be performed, and both argue that their own social station belongs within the fold of the gentle.¹⁹ When Aurelius releases Dorigen from her bonds, for example, he insists that others read his acts as consonant with his status: “Thus kan a squier doon a gentil dede / As wel as kan a knight, withouten drede” (V[F] 1543–44). The philosopher likewise uses the notion of generous behavior to lay claim to gentility for those of his social station:

This philosophre answerde, “Leeve brother,
 Everich of yow dide gentilly til oother.
 Thou art a squier, and he is a knyght;
 But God forbede, for his blisful myght,
 But if a clerk koude doon a gentil dede
 As wel as any of yow, it is no drede!
 Sire, I releesse thee thy thousand pound,
 As thou right now were copen out of the ground,
 Ne nevere er now ne haddest knowen me.” (V[F] 1607–15)

By comparing his actions to those of Aurelius, the philosopher shows that he is playing the same social game of claiming gentle status, one that is explicitly tied into markers of social station. Thus, in the conclusion of the Franklin’s Tale, we can see Aurelius and the philosopher attempting to outperform each other in terms of generosity, each trying to secure for himself the social capital that Arveragus, the knight, has from the very beginning.

Chaucer complicates matters as we move out into the frame, for the Franklin, as narrator, studiously sidesteps the gentility debate raised in the tale in his speech to his fellow pilgrims. It is fitting that the Franklin, whose own gentility is ambiguous, should refuse to interpret the gentility of the characters in his tale.²⁰ As narrator of this tale, the Franklin has the chance to guide the

19. On the class commitments (or lack thereof) evidenced in the Franklin’s Tale, see, for example, John M. Fyler, “Love and Degree in the Franklin’s Tale,” *Chaucer Review* 21 (1987): 321–37; Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 105–9; Susan Crane, “The Franklin as Dorigen,” *Chaucer Review* 24 (1990): 236–52; Felicity Riddy, “Engendering Pity in the Franklin’s Tale,” in *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and All Her Sect*, ed. Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 54–71; and D. Vance Smith, *Arts of Possession: The Middle English Household Imaginary*, *Medieval Cultures* 33 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 39–43.

20. Carruthers, “The Gentilesse of Chaucer’s Franklin,” *Criticism* 23 (1981): 283–300, p. 300; Gordon Hall Gerould, “The Social Status of Chaucer’s Franklin,” *PMLA* 41 (1926): 262–79; Roy Percy, “Chaucer’s Franklin and the Literary Vavasour,” *Chaucer Review* 8 (1973): 33–59; R. H. Hilton, *The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages: The Ford Lectures for 1973*

audience through an interpretation of his tale's conclusion or even to offer a personal statement on gentility. Instead, however, he leaves the question open for debate. Whereas the characters in his tale each make a case for their own gentility, as narrator he refuses hermeneutic mastery:

Lordynges, this question, thanne, wol I aske now,
Which was the mooste fre, as thynketh yow?
Now telleth me, er that ye ferther wende.
I kan namoore; my tale is at an ende. (V[F] 1621–24)

The Franklin's eschewing of overt class commitments here contrasts sharply with the characters of his tale. Even the tone intended for the Franklin's closing words is ambiguous: "Now telleth me," he says—is he here encouraging the pilgrims to debate the question, or is he genuinely flummoxed, using the plural imperative to underline his desire for others to help him find the answer to this question? And the tone of his final line here, "I kan namoore," is similarly unclear. Is he merely expressing that he has reached the conclusion, or is he indicating some exhaustion, having resigned himself to his failure to determine who is *the mooste fre*?

The Franklin thus ends on an indeterminate note vis-à-vis social class: he asks an unanswerable question, one on which the tale had given no guidance. Aurelius was *fre* when he released Dorigen from her contract. The philosopher was *fre* when he released Aurelius from his debt. Thus both the squire and the philosopher have a seemingly equal claim to being the "moost fre."²¹

(Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), pp. 25–27; D. W. Robertson, "Chaucer and the 'Commune Profit': The Manor," *Mediaevalia* 6 (1980): 239–250, p. 249; Stephen Knight, "Ideology in the Franklin's Tale," *Parergon* 28 (1980): 3–31, pp. 11–12; Henrik Specht, *Chaucer's Franklin in "The Canterbury Tales"* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1981), *passim*; Nigel Saul, "The Social Status of Chaucer's Franklin: A Reconsideration," *Medium Ævum* 52 (1983): 10–26; Peter Coss, "Literature and Social Terminology: The Vavasour in England," in *Social Relations and Ideas: Essays in Honour of R. H. Hilton*, ed. T. H. Aston et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 109–50; Wolfgang E. H. Rudat, "Gentilesse and the Marriage Debate in the Franklin's Tale: Chaucer's Squires and the Question of Nobility," *Neophilologus* 68 (1984): 467–70; Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire*, pp. 152–59; Nigel Saul, "Chaucer and Gentility," in *Chaucer's England: Literature in Historical Context*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp. 41–55; and Elizabeth Mauer Sembler, "A Frankeleyn Was in His Compaignye," in *Chaucer's Pilgrims: An Historical Guide to the Pilgrims in the "Canterbury Tales"*, ed. Laura C. Lambdin and Robert T. Lambdin (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996), pp. 135–44.

21. This refusal to answer the final question is a Chaucerian innovation, for in Boccaccio's *Il Filocolo*, we learn that the Arveragus figure, because he gave his wife freely, is the noblest. See Nicholas Havelly, ed. and trans., *Chaucer's Boccaccio: Sources of "Troilus" and the "Knight's"*

So whereas Aurelius and the philosopher of Orléans each try to arrest the slippery meanings of gentility so that it encompasses their own particular station, the Franklin highlights its ambiguity and merely walks away.

But perhaps the final question Chaucer gives to his Franklin, “Which was the moost fre, as thynketh yow?” (V[F] 1622), could never offer any firm resolution to the gentility debate, for the very term *fre* could be pressed into either side’s service: it could, that is, denote the state of one’s birth, with *fre*-dom representing high birth, underscoring the connection between gentility and noble blood. But *fre* could simultaneously denote virtuous behavior: generosity, liberality, and kindness, thus pointing to gentility as manifested in nurture, not nature.²² Thus, the Franklin’s parting question, by employing a term whose meaning could be used either to reinforce the connection between gentility and blood or to sever that very connection, leaves us with a frustrating opacity, refusing to answer the question raised by the tale’s ending: is gentility innate, or is it learnable and acquirable by those not born into the right caste? Chaucer never answers this question for us, as the Franklin’s parting words mark the end of Fragment V. Creating a minor landowner as a narrator who fails to weigh in on the very gentility debate at the center of his own tale shows us that Chaucer was attuned to the ambiguous class associations of franklins.

For William Langland, on the other hand, franklins stabilize class boundaries, even if they are located no less at the margins of gentility. Langland mentions franklins several times in *Piers Plowman*, and in these cases they represent for him the farthest reaches of respectable society. In the famous authorial *apologia* from the C-Text, Langland contends that clerks should only be drawn from those with the means to support themselves:

For sholde no clerke be crouned but yf he come were
Of frankeleynes and fre men and of folke yweddred.
Bondemen and bastardus and beggares children,
Thyse bylongeth to labory, and lordes kyn to serue.²³

and “*Franklin’s Tales*,” *Chaucer Studies* 3 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1980), pp. 154–61. The Franklin is, in fact, the only pilgrim to end his or her tale with a question. It should be noted that the conclusion of the Franklin’s Tale corresponds with the end of Fragment V, and that there is no endlink to this tale. Thus, it is possible, as Specht, *Chaucer’s Franklin*, pp. 173–74, hypothesizes, that Chaucer intended to supply a conclusion but never got around to it.

22. *OED*, s.v. “free” (adj.), (n.), and (adv.); and *MED*, s.v. “frē” (adj.), defs. 1a, 2a, and 2b.

23. William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A New Annotated Edition of the C-Text*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008), V.66–69. In the C-Text, see also X.240 and XXI.39. For franklins in the B-Text, see William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt (London: Everyman, 1995), XIX.39.

In Langland's ethnography, society is divided into laborers and freemen/franklins, with the latter eligible for clerkly roles and the former made for working the land.

Finally *Mum and the Sothsegger*, an alliterative poem written in a Langlandian idiom, has a quite extensive engagement with this social category. The narrator is seeking a resolution to the contesting claims of Sothsegger, who advocates the unveiling of hypocrisy and loudly proclaims the need for social justice, and Mum, who prefers the easier path of keeping quiet. The text initially places franklins as but one station within the variegated English social landscape:

Thenne ferkid I to fre men and frankeleyns mony,
 To bonde-men and bourgois and many other barnes,
 To knightz and to comunes and craftz-men eeke,
 To citezeyns and souurayns and to many grete sires,
 To bachilliers, to banerettz, to barons and erles,
 To princes and peris and alle maniere estat;z;
 But in euery court there I came or cumpaigny outhir
 I fonde mo mvmmers atte moneth-ende
 Than of sothe-sigger[z] by seuene score thousand.²⁴

This list covers almost every medieval secular estate, and none, including "frankeleyns mony," are able to provide moral guidance. But the narrator's first glimmer of an answer to his quest finally comes from a franklin, who provides a long, and unequivocal, diatribe demonstrating that Mum is the *radix omnium malorum*: "Thenne lepte I forth lightly and lokid a-boute, / And I beheulde a faire hovs with halles and chambres, / A frankeleyn-is fre-holde al fresshe newe" (944–46). The text does not dwell on his identity as a franklin, but surely it is a significant choice by the author: as a franklin, this character is sufficiently marginalized and removed from the power structures of the aristocracy to achieve an independent perspective on the deleterious effects of Mum. At the same time, as a "fre-holde[r]," he has an elevated enough social position to speak with authority. A franklin, for the *Mum*-author, is a figure of local, but limited, authority, one who is free to speak the truth.

In all these cases, the franklins' position at the margins of landed society meant that they formed the most obvious, because most proximate, target for mercantile social anxieties. In the late feudal imaginary, urban protocapital-

24. *Mum and the Sothsegger*, in *The Piers Plowman Tradition*, ed. Helen Barr (London: Everyman, 1993), lines 788–96.

ism had little class prestige and little representation in textual culture. Overt espousals of mercantile prerogatives, like that found in “A Good Matter,” looked to the lowest ranks of the landed as their collective aristocratic *bêtes noires*.²⁵

Conclusion

Ultimately, “A Good Matter” could not maintain the fiction of separate spheres for the franklin and the merchant: the text’s invocation and conclusion mire themselves in social ambiguity. The opening refers to its auditors as “ye godely gentylnen” (fol. 59r), while the closing asks “Lythe and lystenyn, gentylnen, þat have herde thys songe to ende” (fol. 63r), flattering the imagined audience by painting them as members of the landed elite—the primary denotation of *gentleman* by the mid-fifteenth century, when “A Good Matter” was composed.²⁶ But such flattery sits uncomfortably within a text that questions the morality of a landed economy, the very basis upon which the elite rested. Moreover, as noted above, gentlemen in “A Good Matter” were explicitly part of the conflict-ridden world of medieval land ownership, and one of the estates whose members refused to serve as the Franklin’s executor. Although positioning the audience as gentlemen is common in medieval literary texts, in the context of “A Good Matter,” *gentlemen* is hardly an unproblematic term of approbation.

“A Good Matter” recognizes, if obliquely, the interpenetration of rural and urban spheres, for of the Franklin it is said that “yf any man boght of hys

25. See also “The Tale of Gamelyn,” in *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, ed. Stephen Knight and Thomas Ohlgren (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2000), pp. 184–226, lines 191–286, where Gamelyn defeats a giant in a wrestling match, thereby freeing a franklin’s two sons. The franklin in this tale is clearly a wealthy figure, but is also inferior to the gentlemen who dictate the start and stop of the wrestling match. On “Gamelyn,” Chaucer, and the ideology of minor landowners, see T. A. Shippey, “*The Tale of Gamelyn*: Class Warfare and the Embarrassments of Genre,” in Putter and Gilbert, eds., *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, pp. 78–96.

26. On the status associated with *gentleman* by the mid-fifteenth century, when “A Good Matter” was composed, see Philippa Maddern, “Gentility,” in Raluca Radulescu and Alison Truelove, eds., *Gentry Culture in Late-Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 18–34, p. 23; Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, pp. 45–47; T. B. Pugh, “The Magnates, Knights, and Gentry,” in S. A. Chrimes, R. A. Griffiths, and C. D. Ross, eds., *Fifteenth-Century England, 1399–1509* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972), 86–128, p. 96; D. A. L. Morgan, “The Individual Style of the English Gentleman,” in Michael Jones, ed., *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1986), pp. 15–35; and Maurice Keen, *The Origins of the English Gentleman: Heraldry, Chivalry, and Gentility in Medieval England, c. 1300–c. 1500* (Gloucestershire: Stroud, 2002). See also *MED*, s.v. “gentil-man” (n.).

chaffere, yn case he had nede to borowe, / he schulde pay the derrer for the loone, thus dydd he moche sorowe" (fol. 59v). The word *chaffare* in Middle English denoted trade in goods or bartering—more properly the world of William and his master than of the rural Franklin.²⁷ Moreover, by the tale's end, when the master nears his death, he bequeaths to William "all thy fadur londys" and "all myn also." William, that is, by regaining his patrilineal lands, will once again be a participant in the rural landed economy. But we also learn here that the master had lands of his own all along, and he turns these over to William as well. Urban and rural economies thus largely collapse together by the end of the poem.

We can also find evidence contesting the separation of mercantile and landed identities in the very same manuscript that contains "A Good Matter": here, we also find a copy of Northern *Octavian*, a romance that includes a memorably humorous send-up of those engaged in urban economic exchange (fols. 90r–101v). By depicting the aristocrat as the one who naturally gives generously, and the urban figure as the one who cannot comprehend such gestures of largesse, this moment directly inverts the claims to mercantile gentility found in "A Good Matter," a mere thirty-one folios before *Octavian*. The cohabitation of these two narratives within CUL Ff.2.38 leaves an unresolved clash of ideologies, with two contradictory visions about which class best exemplifies largesse, thereby undercutting the attempts in "A Good Matter" to keep mercantile identity neatly insulated from the landed economy.

Octavian tells the story of the Emperor of Rome and his family, exemplifying a typical romance pattern of a family separated and then reunited.²⁸ While separated, the Emperor's son is adopted by a guildsman in Paris, and he grows up unaware of his aristocratic blood. On an errand one day, he encounters a man selling a horse. Without any exploration of his motivations, the text merely relates that the child wanted the horse—leaving the reader to conclude

27. MED, s.v. "chaffāre" (n.), defs. 1–3. Chaucer's Parson makes this connection between *chaffare* and urban economics most explicitly in his discussion of *luxuria*: "And right as a marchant deliteth hym moost in chaffare that he hath moost advantage of, right so deliteth the fend in this ordure" (X[I].850).

28. See Lee C. Ramsey, *Chivalric Romances: Popular Literature in Medieval England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 157–88; Gordon Hall Gerould, "Forerunners, Congeners, and Derivatives of the Eustace Legend," *PMLA* 19.3 (1904): 335–448, pp. 436–41; Harriet Hudson, "Construction of Class, Family, and Gender in Some Middle English Popular Romances," in Britton J. Harwood and Gillian R. Overing, eds., *Class and Gender in Early English Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 76–94; Hudson, "Linear or Nuclear? Family Patterns in Some Middle English Popular Romances," *Publications of the Medieval Association of the Midwest* 12 (2005): 26–51; and Michael Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 68–77.

that the child is naturally drawn to an animal representing the aristocracy. When the horse-seller asks for £30, the child insists on paying £40, an offer gladly accepted.²⁹ This moment replicates the unmotivated generosity of the master in “A Good Matter,” only now it is the landed aristocrat who has the natural inclination to give more than was asked—reflecting the traditional class commitments of romance. By offering more than the asking price, the child unwittingly reveals his true nature, for in romance’s imaginary, those with gentle blood cannot but help display largesse. On the other hand, the horse-seller, a figure from the urban economy, is only too happy to accept more than he had hoped for, motivated as he is by the desire for profit. As I have argued elsewhere, the amount the child pays for the horse precisely equates to the income level at which distraint for knighthood was set. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the English crown demanded that anyone with lands worth £40 or more *per annum* be knighted, a marker of one’s aristocratic credentials.³⁰ This aristocratic child, mislocated to an urban space, unwittingly reveals his true origins by insisting on precisely £40, revealing his membership among the landed elite. At the same time, by offering more than the asking price, he shows that an aristocrat cannot grasp the mercantile act of selling and haggling. In such a formulation, the aristocrat is the one for whom generosity trumps financial calculation, while the urban figure takes the money and runs.

The erosion of barriers separating rural and urban economic spheres within these literary texts, found as much in the inability of “A Good Matter” to keep the mercantile and rural worlds separated from one another as in the contradictory claims of “A Good Matter” and *Octavian* about who most naturally enacts largesse, points to the ongoing interpenetration of the landed and urban spheres in late-medieval England. The urban patriciate developed a social nomenclature mirroring that of the landowning gentry, leading one historian to label them the “urban gentry.”³¹ Merchants owned rural property and the landed aristocracy engaged in and depended upon trade.³² But CUL

29. *Octovian: Edited from Lincoln, Dean and Chapter Library, MS 91 and Cambridge, University Library, MS Ff.2.38*, ed. Frances McSparran, Early English Text Society, o.s., 289 (London: Oxford University Press, 1986), lines 709–44.

30. Michael Johnston, “Romance, Distraint, and the Gentry,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112.4 (2013): 433–60.

31. Rosemary Horrox, “The Urban Gentry in the Fifteenth Century,” in *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. John A. F. Thomson (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1988), pp. 22–44.

32. Pamela Nightingale, “Knights and Merchants: Trade, Politics and the Gentry in Late Medieval England,” *Past and Present* 169.1 (2000): 36–62; *Town and Country in the Middle Ages: Contrasts, Contacts and Interconnections, 1100–1500*, ed. Kate Giles and Christopher Dyer,

Ff.2.38 suggests that literature did not simply mirror the socioeconomic realities of late-medieval life, with its blending of economic realms. By positioning itself against the economic and moral world of its nearest landed counterparts, the franklins, and proudly participating in the debate about gentility, “A Good Matter” marks an incipient attempt to carve out a place for urban socioeconomics within literary culture. But its false steps and its inclusion alongside *Octavian* remind us that this was a premature effort. The bourgeoisie’s time had not yet come.

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Society for Medieval Archaeology 22 (Leeds: Maney, 2005); Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300–1500* (1948; repr. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), pp. 234–87; and David Avery, *The Mediaeval Merchant-Gentry of Edmonton Hundred*, Edmonton Hundred Historical Society Occasional Paper 60 (n.p.: Edmonton Hundred Historical Society, 2000).

Resident Aliens

The Literary Ecology of Medieval Mice

LISA J. KISER

Mice appear in many medieval texts, but, as when seeking them out in our houses, we must often expose their hiding places to bring them to light. Not surprisingly, in the Middle Ages mice had very bad reputations as invaders of human space, as pilferers and contaminants of people's food, and as instigators of fear quite disproportionate to their tiny size. Indeed, medieval culture's intense disapproval of mice was shared by the mightiest theologians and the poorest peasants alike, members of all stations feeling strongly enough about this animal to leave behind traces of their disdain. This essay will analyze some specific works of medieval literature, mainly fables, that employ mice in major roles, demonstrating that the depiction of the behavior of mice in these fables tells us much about medieval folk beliefs concerning animal-human relationships, natural and unnatural habitats, environmental niches, and the presence of a food chain that included both animals and humans within it. Over and above containing many widely understood social attitudes, then, fabular literature can also serve as an unsuspected source of knowledge about medieval environmental thought.

As background to medieval thought, we should note that mice are explicitly mentioned in Leviticus as "unclean" animals; for this reason, Rabanus Maurus and other theologians warned against the consumption of their flesh.¹

1. Leviticus 11:29. See Rabanus Maurus, *Expositiones in Leviticum*, 3.2, *Patrologia Latina* (hereafter *PL*) 108:361. Mice themselves are gluttons, says Rabanus, and they signify greedy humans who steal from others to satisfy their desire for earthly goods (*De universo*, *PL* 111:226). This moral assessment of mice is often repeated in the bestiaries. See, for example, *Bestiary*, trans. Richard Barber (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1992), p. 109. Mice, however, do not often appear

St. Augustine, too, disparages the creature; his commentary on the biblical story of Noah and the Flood explicitly digresses to assure its readers that there were no mice on the ark, even though God's purpose in having the ark built was to save the earth's animals as well as its people from the destructive waters.² (The English Chester play of Noah and the Flood, which rather lovingly catalogs the animals being saved, *does* mention mice, *pace* Augustine—but they are only present as food and toys for the cats.)³ When we turn to medieval hagiographical texts we discover mice in abundance, but entirely *in malo*. St. Francis, known as the lover and protector of vulnerable creatures, drew the line at mice according to his biographers. He simply couldn't—and didn't—love them, seeing them as a trial of his patience, sent by the devil himself, when he found them in his sickroom.⁴ Other medieval saints served their devotees as mouse-repellents. One could, at different times and in different places during the Middle Ages, pray to saints Gertrude, Cainnicus, Cairicius, Ulrich, Fina, and Nicasius, among others, to protect oneself and one's food supply from murine invasion.⁵ In the medieval chronicle tradi-

in medieval bestiaries, and they never appear in the *Physiologus*. For a short summary of the commonest bestiary lore concerning mice, see Florence McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), p. 143. For other negative accounts of the mouse in the Bible, see 1 Samuel 5–6, where a mouse plague is inflicted on the Philistines as divine punishment, and Isaiah 66:17, which insists that mouse-flesh is an abomination as great as that of pork.

2. "As to another customary inquiry of the scrupulous about the very minute creatures . . . such as mice . . . , there was no need for those creatures being in the ark which are born without the union of the sexes," *City of God*, 15. 27, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 518. Other theologians followed Augustine in leaving off the ark all animals, like mice, that were thought to reproduce by spontaneous generation. See, for example, Hugh of St. Victor, *De Arca Noe morali* 12, in *Selected Spiritual Writings*, trans. a religious of the order C S M V (London: Faber, 1962), p. 63; Rabanus Maurus, *In Genesim*, 2.6, PL 107:517; Remigius of Auxerre, *In Genesim*, 6, PL 131:75. The belief that mice originated in the earth is noted in Pliny's *Natural History*, 9.84, and it is repeated by many medieval authorities. See, for example, Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, 12.3.1: "Alii dicunt mures, quod ex humore terrae nascuntur," PL 82:440; and Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, 18.73. It also appears in the bestiary tradition; see, for example, Barber, *Bestiary*, p. 109; and T. H. White, trans., *The Bestiary: A Book of Beasts* (New York: Putnam, 1960), p. 91. For a survey of this belief, see Warren Dawson, "The Mouse in Fable and Folklore," *Folk-lore* 36 (1925): 239–40.

3. *Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills, Early English Text Society, s.s. 3, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), p. 49, lines 177–80. See Lisa J. Kiser, "The Animals in Chester's *Noah's Flood*," *Early Theatre* 14.1 (2011): 15–44.

4. See the *Legend of Perugia*, chap. 43, in *Scripta Leonis, Rufini, et Angeli Sociorum S. Francisci*, ed. and trans. Rosalind B. Brooke (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), pp. 162–65; and *The Mirror of Perfection*, chap. 100, in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, trans. Regius Armstrong et al., vol. 3 (New York: New City, 2001), pp. 346–47.

5. For the cult of St. Gertrude, see Jacques Berchtold, *Des Rats & des Ratières: Anamorphoses d'un métaphorique de saint Augustin à Jean Racine* (Geneva: Droz, 1992), pp. 72–85; for

tion, bad emperors, kings, and bishops were sometimes divinely punished with plagues of mice.⁶ And, from records that encode medieval folk belief, Aron Gurevich notes that among the accoutrements in the kitbags of medieval sorcerers one could find “mouse body parts”; if a person were found to have such things, he could be punished to the fullest extent of the law.⁷ Other traditions that connect mice to demonic spheres occur in Germanic folklore, which frequently suggests that mice can be demons, elves, dwarves, and witches in transformed shape.⁸ Mice also had associations with death or the ravages of time.⁹ Even the comic beast epics deride the mouse for its alarming reproductive fecundity: at the funeral of Pele the Rat, Chauve the Mouse arrives in mourning costume with eleven sisters and brothers, forty children, and sixty cousins.¹⁰

Cainnicus, see Helen Waddell, *Beasts and Saints* (London: Constable, 1934), p. 106, and Edina Bozoky, “Saints, Legends, and Charms,” in *Telling Tales: Medieval Narratives and the Folk Tradition*, ed. Francesca Canadé Sautman, Diana Conchado, and Giuseppe Carlo Di Scipio (New York: St. Martin’s, 1998), p. 175; for Cairicius, see Bozoky, p. 175; for Ulrich, see *Acta Sanctorum* (February 20), col. 228; for Fina, see *The Legend of the Holy Fina, Virgin of Santo Gimignano*, trans. M. Mansfield (New York: Cooper Square, 1966), p. 11; for Nicasius, see R. Rieger, s.v. “Maus,” in *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* 6, ed. Hanns Bächtold-Stäubli (Berlin, 1934–35), p. 53. Rieger, pp. 53–54, also lists many other saints who were seen as protectors from mice. For an English example of Gertrude’s and Nicasius’s importance to agricultural communities, see the fourteenth-century folk poem invoking their aid as a charm to ward away mice; the poem is edited by Kenneth Sisam in *Fourteenth-Century Verse and Prose* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), p. 170. Jean Delumeau, in *Rassurer et Protéger: Le Sentiment de Sécurité dans l’Occident d’autrefois* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), pp. 62 and 65, also records maledictions and excommunications being ritually performed against mice and rats in the medieval period. See also E. P. Evans, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* (London: Heinemann, 1906), pp. 18–21 and 131–33.

6. See the chronicles mentioned in Berchtold, *Des Rats & des Ratières*, p. 131n; they include Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain*, Roger of Wendover’s *Chronica*, and Vincent of Beauvais’s *Speculum Historiale*. See also the legend of Bishop Hatto and the folktale of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, both discussed in Berchtold, p. 16. Gerald of Wales has his own version of mice as divine punishers; see *The Journey through Wales*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (New York: Penguin, 1978), p. 190.

7. Gurevich quotes from Gregory of Tours’s *History of the Franks*, 9.6; for this passage and others about mouse parts as sorcerers’ tools, see Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 60–61. The widespread storing and carrying of mouse parts may also indicate folk-medicinal uses for them. See Rieger, *Handwörterbuch*, pp. 55–60.

8. Rieger, *Handwörterbuch*, pp. 36–39.

9. See Beryl Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973), p. 128; and Herbert Friedmann, *A Bestiary for St. Jerome: Animal Symbolism in European Religious Art* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1980), pp. 271–72.

10. *The Romance of Reynard the Fox*, trans. D. D. R. Owen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 36.

Finally, we must not forget the important role that the lowly mouse played in the development of medieval eucharistic thought. As part of their debates on the doctrine of the Real Presence of the body of Christ in the consecrated Host, medieval theologians frequently used the mouse as an example of a creature that might consume the consecrated Host undeservingly, thereby provoking difficult and troublesome theological dilemmas. Is Christ's body defiled in the digestive system of the animal? Or does the Host only become Christ's body when it is inside the mouth of a fitting celebrant?¹¹ Questions relating to the mouse as a possible wafer-eater were not just academic, but were pastoral as well: an alert reader of the medieval penitentials will discover that mice got into the wafers often enough for there to be a specified penance of forty days for priests who, through negligence, let these little animals nourish themselves on the body of our Lord.¹²

The mouse offends human populations precisely because of some of the characteristics noted, or implied, by our medieval sources, namely its tendency to invade human spaces, especially food-stores. Originally a wild grass-land animal from the dry steppes of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the mouse attached itself to humans some 10,000 years ago, when humans began to turn from hunting and gathering to agriculture.¹³ With agriculture came the storing of grains and cereals, the mouse's staple foods. In 1983 it was estimated that mice and rats destroyed 20 percent of the worldwide human food

11. For a survey of the mouse in theology, see Artur Michael Landgraf, "Die in der Frühscholastik Klassische Frage *Quid sumit mus*," in *Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik*, vol. 2 (Regensburg, 1955), pp. 207–22. See also Gary Macy, "Of Mice and Manna: *Quid Mus Sumit* as a Pastoral Question," *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale* 58 (1991): 157–66; and Charles E. Sheedy, *The Eucharistic Controversy of the Eleventh Century Against the Background of Pre-Scholastic Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), pp. 95–96. In the *Sentences*, Peter Lombard comments, "Quid ergo sumit mus, vel quid manducat? Deus novit hoc" (PL 192: 869). Joyce E. Salisbury, in *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 65, argues that the mouse with the wafer shows the animal crossing a strongly held boundary as it partakes of the only food that is set aside for humans alone, namely spiritual food. More recently, Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt have made this issue widely known by employing it in an argument about *Hamlet*; see their *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), esp. pp. 140–51.

12. Celtic penitentials as early as the sixth century address the problem of animal access to the Host, and they continue to do so throughout the medieval period, usually singling out mice for particular attention. See, for example, Ludwig Bieler, *The Irish Penitentials: Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, vol. 5 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1963), pp. 63, 113, and 125; "Poenitentiale Romanum," in *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, trans. John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 309; and Gratian, *Decretum*, PL 187:1780.

13. David Alderton, *Rodents of the World* (New York: Facts on File, 1996), p. 10; and Peter W. Hanney, *Rodents: Their Lives and Habitats* (New York: Taplinger, 1975), p. 110.

supply;¹⁴ bearing that modern percentage rate in mind, which was reached in spite of all of our modern toxins and technologies, one can imagine how much more of the medieval food supply was eaten by these rodents.¹⁵ Moreover, mice will eat just about anything. Although they prefer starch-filled seeds, they will eat fruit, vegetables, insects, nuts, meat, cheese, candles, soap, shoe leather, paper, parchment, upholstery, cloth, paint, and glue.¹⁶ Mice are also extremely fertile. Every twenty to thirty days, adult females (meaning females of twenty-five to forty days old) can have litters, which average five to seven in number, after a gestation period of only nineteen days.¹⁷ The common house mouse (*Mus musculus domesticus*), found throughout Western Europe, lives exclusively in buildings and thus totally depends on humans for its survival. But other species live in close proximity to human settlements; harvest mice (*Micromys minutus*) live in areas with tall vegetation, such as wheatfields or cornfields, and wood mice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), the major threat to crops during harvest time in the United Kingdom, live along fields but near enough to forested areas to have access to their main wintertime food, acorns.¹⁸

In short, mice and humans compete directly for food, an ecological fact that would have had serious economic consequences for medieval communities living near the edge of survival. As a result, medieval people thought

14. Robert Hendrickson, *More Cunning Than Man: A Social History of Rats and Men* (New York: Stein and Day, 1983), p. 18.

15. See Vito Fumagalli, "Gli animali e l'agricoltura," in *L'uomo di fronte al mondo animale nell'alto medioevo*, Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 31, vol. 1 (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1985), p. 597, for an assessment of the destructive plagues of mice, especially in Italy's medieval period. On mouse population spikes, see R. J. Berry, "Population Dynamics of the House Mouse," in *Biology of the House Mouse*, ed. R. J. Berry, Symposia of the Zoological Society of London 47 (London: Zoological Society, 1981), pp. 395–425. Thomas of Cantimpré, in his *Liber de natura rerum* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973), 4.78, p. 132, begins his entry on mice by noting that they eat humans' food ("ex frugibus ad pastus humanos fiunt") and that they are extremely clever in seeking out their nourishment, avoiding no danger in the process ("in perquirendis cibis sollertissimi sunt et pro hiis plerumque nulla vitant pericula").

16. Horst Bielfeld, *Mice* (New York: Barron, 1985), p. 25; Hendrickson, *More Cunning Than Man*, p. 39; and Hanney, *Rodents*, p. 112. For medieval mice as explicit enemies of manuscripts and books, see Berchtold, *Des Rats & des Ratières*, 9–19, and Richard de Bury, *Philobiblon*, 8.

17. Bielfeld, *Mice*, pp. 48–52; and Hanney, *Rodents*, p. 111. The fecundity of mice was often exaggerated in classical and medieval sources. Pliny, for example, says that he has heard of 120 mice being born in a single litter (*Natural History* 10.85); both he and Aristotle report that female mice have been found pregnant while still in the womb (*Natural History* 10.85; Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 6.30).

18. Bielfeld, *Mice*, pp. 61–63; Hendrickson, *More Cunning Than Man*, p. 175; Alderton, *Rodents of the World*, pp. 41, 77–78, and 136; R. J. Ward, "Diet and Nutrition," in Berry, *Biology of the House Mouse*, pp. 260–63; and C. H. S. Watts, "Foods Eaten by Wood Mice and Bank Voles in Wytham Woods, Berkshire," *Journal of Animal Ecology* 37 (1968): 25–42.

carefully about this animal's behavior, its bodily characteristics, its nutritional requirements, and its habitats. They also expressed strong desires to keep the animal outside of human spaces, arguing in a variety of ways that the mouse doesn't belong there and that, in entering human habitations, it actually violates natural law. In the beast fables, to which we will now turn, these attitudes are strongly expressed. When animals in fables cross "natural" boundaries, for example, by moving outside of their perceived habitats, or when they otherwise engage in behavior inappropriate to their "natural" identities, or to what humans want their natural identities to be, they become available for moral punishment in the fables, for fables tend to be conservative not just on ethical and social issues involving humans, but on those involving animals as well. Just as people should not pridefully strive to transcend the social stations to which they were assigned at birth, so animals should remain content with the habitats in which they belong.¹⁹ In fables about mice, for instance, clear judgments are made about this animal's various living arrangements and methods of food procurement—and punishment always awaits the mouse who invades human space too confidently, who becomes what was wittily described by some of the fabulists as a "resident alien" in human territory.²⁰ Even in fables in which the mice are shown to be sympathetic victims of larger animals' predation, or in which the mice are said, in the allegorical morals, to stand for *good* things, like the human soul or the patient and deserving poor, there is often nonetheless an attempt to contain the mice, suppressing readerly sympathy for them by hinting at their bad habits of invading human space. Robert Henryson's version of the town mouse and the country mouse perhaps most

19. For the fables' turn from moral to social issues in the twelfth century, see Arnold Clayton Henderson's essays "'Of Heigh or Lough Estate': Medieval Fabulists as Social Critics," *Vivator* 9 (1978): 265–90; "Animal Fables as Vehicles of Social Protest and Satire: Twelfth Century to Henryson," *Proceedings, Third International Beast Epic, Fable and Fabliau Colloquium*, ed. Jan Goossens and Timothy Sodman (Cologne: Bohlau, 1981), pp. 160–73; and "Medieval Beasts and Modern Cages: The Making of Meaning in Fables and Bestiaries," *PMLA* 97 (1982): 40–49. Fabular conservatism is also noted by Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, p. 127, and R. Howard Bloch, *The Anonymous Marie de France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 184. Bloch also raises the idea of habitat as a metaphor for social station (pp. 163–74).

20. One metrical version of "De Mure Agresti et Urbano" from the Romulus Nilantius, ed. Léopold Hervieux, *Fabulistes Latins depuis le siècle d'Auguste jusqu'à la fin du moyen âge*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1883–94; repr. New York: Burt Franklin, 1965), p. 661, employs the word *incola* to refer to the town mouse. For the secondary meaning of this word as "resident alien," see *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, s.v. "incola," I. A. and the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "incola," def. 2. Medieval Latin shows this meaning of the word especially strongly in its adjectival form, *incolatus*, which is used to describe residence, without citizenship, in a town or nation. See *Dictionary of Medieval Latin From British Sources*, fascicule IV, ed. D. R. Howlett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), s.v. "incolatus," def. 1b. The word *incola* is also used by Pliny to describe the semidomesticated mouse that inhabits humans' dwellings; see *Natural History* 8.82.

famously illustrates this ambivalence about mice; both of his mice, including the country mouse, are labeled thieves, even though the country mouse is less obviously engaged in stealing (since it takes its food from cultivated fields outdoors rather than from human dwellings) than the town mouse, which resides indoors right under humans' noses.²¹

The fable I wish to examine first, however, is a bit more subtle in its attention to mouse habitat, though it is just as insistent about exploring the issue. This fable, the Mouse and the Frog, is one of the most common in medieval fable collections.²² In its barest essentials, the story goes like this: a mouse wants to cross a river, and it seeks help in doing so from a frog. The frog suggests that the mouse tie its foot to the frog's leg with a piece of thread; then, the frog argues, the mouse can be safely pulled across the water. As soon as the animals reach midstream, however, the frog intentionally submerges, drowning the mouse. A kite sees the mouse's floating corpse and it swoops down to grab it, taking with it the attached frog. Both animals thus come to a grisly end in the claws, and ultimately the stomach, of the mouse's natural enemy. The moral of the story varies from version to version, but the usual moral is that he who deceives an innocent person will become ensnared in his own trap and come to a bad end.²³ Sometimes the moral is given Christian

21. See especially lines 167–68; the rural mouse lives “in uthur mennis skaith / As outlawes dois, and levit on hir waith”; and line 203, where both mice are called “pykeris.” Quotations from Henryson's fables are from the edition of Denton Fox, *The Poems of Robert Henryson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

22. This fable first appears in the *Vita Aesopi* of the first century a.d., and it is given tale-type no. 278 in Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson's *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*, 2nd rev. ed. (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1964). In Stith Thompson's *Motif Index of Folk Literature*, rev. ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955–58), it is given the number J681.1. Hervieux edits a large number of versions of this fable extant from the tenth through the fifteenth centuries in volume 2 of his series. Two of these medieval versions have been more recently edited; see *Alessandro Neckam, Novus Aesopus*, ed. Giovanni Garbugino, *Favolisti Latini Medievali*, II, Università di Genova Pubblicazioni dell'istituto di filologia classica e medievale, n.s., vol. 3 (Genoa: Università di Genova Pubblicazioni, 1987), p. 64; and *Favole di Ademaro di Chabannes*, ed. Ferruccio Bertini and Paolo Gatti, *Favolisti Latini Medievali*, III, Università di Genova Pubblicazioni dell'istituto di filologia classica e medievale, n.s., vol. 118 (Genoa: Università di Genova Pubblicazioni, 1988), p. 52. This fable outnumbers most others in its frequency of appearance in medieval collections; Gerd Dicke and Klaus Grubmüller, in *Die Fabeln des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1987), pp. 185–91, catalog over a hundred versions between the early medieval and the early modern periods. Frederick Whitesell, in “Fables in Medieval Exempla,” *Journal of English and German Philology* 46 (1947): 358, accounts the Mouse and the Frog as one of the most often-referenced fables in medieval exempla, as well. The fable's outlines are apparent in the ancient Greek mock-epic *Batrachomyomachia*. See Jan M. Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals: Medieval Latin Beast Poetry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), p. 12.

23. This moral is appended to sixteen of the versions printed in Hervieux, *Fabulistes*, vol. 2. It also appears in the scholastic commentaries attached to some of these versions, as well as

dimensions, and the frog is said to be the body, the mouse the soul, and the kite the devil, with the story then illustrating how the body always wickedly drags the soul down until both are snatched by the fiend at the end.²⁴

It is very clear that our sympathies are to lie with the mouse in this fable. Yet the mouse is swiftly killed, even though it did nothing wrong aside from being taken in by the frog's apparent sincerity. This fact alone may be telling us something about medieval people's low threshold of tolerance for mice (no matter how unjustly it perishes, a dead mouse is always better than a live one). But in amplifying this fable, medieval writers sought to make the story more morally satisfying by blackening the character of the mouse enough to justify its coming to such a tragic end. Interestingly, the ways in which the character of the mouse is developed tend to focus on the mouse's desire to cross the river in the first place. As medieval people knew, real mice are naturally averse to water, and they avoid its perimeters out of instinctual fear.²⁵ This fable mouse, then, in medieval people's eyes, is already taking foolish chances by overstepping its natural boundaries, by hankering (as is the creature's wont) to encroach upon another's habitat, this time the frog's.

In most Latin versions of this fable, the mouse's reason for wanting to cross the river is never specified (in general, the earliest Latin fables are quite terse). Yet slowly but surely, as the fable makes its way through time and across Europe, the fable-redactors begin to embellish upon the mouse's motives for wanting to cross the river—and those motives clearly relate to the animal's perceived tendency to wander into the habitats of others without being invited, or being welcome. In this sense, the river in the fable symboli-

in, among others, the French *Ysopet de Chartres*, and the versions of Marie de France, John Lydgate, and Robert Henryson. For the scholastic commentaries, see Edward Wheatley, *Mastering Aesop: Medieval Education, Chaucer, and His Followers* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), pp. 195–225.

24. The Christianized allegorical moral appears in two of Hervieux's versions, one being the commonest verse version, that of "Walter the Englishman," with its attached scholastic commentaries. It is also applied in Robert Henryson's version, with a couple of minor differences. See Wheatley, *Mastering Aesop*, pp. 172–75, 197–98, 206–8, and 214.

25. On mice and their aversion to water (in clear distinction to rats), see J. Bovet, "Rôle des cours d'eau dans la limitation du domaine vital des rongeurs," *Mammalia* 29 (1965): 452–62. Evidence that classical and medieval people knew about this aversion can be found in Aristotle and Pliny, both of whom say that heavy rain or floods are deadly to mice. Bartholomaeus Anglicus's *De proprietatibus rerum* says that mice never drink water (18.73), as does Thomas of Cantimpré's *Liber de natura rerum* (4.78). There are medieval proverbs, too, that seem to express this knowledge: "as drenched as a mouse," "as drunk as a mouse," for example, configure the mice in question as in trouble. See Bartlett Jere Whiting and Helen Wescott Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly Before 1500* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 416. Riegler, *Handwörterbuch*, p. 51, lists some medieval European folk practices that use water to repel mice.

cally represents a boundary that the mouse insists on transgressing, to the chagrin of the medieval community.²⁶ The vernacular fabulists are inventive and clearly attuned to the environmental issues at stake. Yet modern commentators have overlooked the focus in these poems on the environmental transgressions of their mouse-protagonists, thus misreading the works, or, at the very least, finding ambiguities they cannot resolve with respect to what the reader's attitude is supposed to be concerning the mice, their living arrangements, and their project of crossing the river. It is thus well worth our while as literary critics, as well as historians of nature, to pay attention to these details in the texts under examination by focusing resolutely on the mice—as mice.

Marie de France is one of the first to provide a detailed habitat, and a set of morally questionable motives, for the doomed mouse. Marie's mouse has taken up residence in a millhouse, over which she presides as "dame de la maisun" (12).²⁷ She arrogantly flaunts her social position during a conversation with the passing frog; "all here is under my subjection," she brags, and she then serves the frog a fancy meal made up of food she has stolen from the human mill-owner. The frog feels uncomfortable out of its own natural habitat, and it makes a remark suggesting that it misses having water to drink with the meal. When no water is forthcoming, the frog convinces the mouse to come to its own "mansions" (39) in the swamp, where things are even more "bel" (38) than in the millhouse. The mouse, drawn to the prospect of dining even more spectacularly, foolishly agrees to go—and the water tragedy unfolds. Although the mouse escapes in Marie's version, Marie reproaches the creature, first, for believing that it had "seignurie" (16) over human space and goods that were not its own, and second, for risking its life out of a greedy desire to taste even more luxurious food than it already had, food paid for by someone else and served up on someone else's home turf. For Marie, then,

26. A few versions of this fable that come from medieval Italy note that the mouse was on a pilgrimage to Rome when it encountered the unpassable river, allowing these fabulists to configure the mouse as a sinner, which one of them, writing in the fourteenth century and in the vernacular, does at great length: "Avendo il topo disordinati peccati e andando per amoretamente de'suoi peccati in pellegrinaggio, pervenne a uno fiume," *Esopo Toscano*, ed. Vittore Branca (Venice: Marsilio, 1989), p. 73. See also the Latin commentary on the Romulus in British Library MS Add. 33780, 3r; it is Italian and datable to the fourteenth century, and it is printed in Wheatley, *Mastering Aesop*, p. 219; in this commentary the mouse is going to Rome on a pilgrimage. Interestingly, William Caxton's fable (1483), based on a French version of Steinhöwel's text, also says that the mouse was going to Rome. In the religious climate of England in the late fifteenth century, however, going on pilgrimage to Rome was by no means a clear sign of moral virtue.

27. All quotations from Marie's version of the fable are from the edition of Karl Warnke, *Die Fabeln der Marie de France*, Bibliotheca Normannica 6 (Halle: Niemeyer, 1898).

the mouse's punishing adventure in the water was definitely brought on by an overstepping of "natural bounds," which began before the story commenced, when the mouse moved into human premises.

Robert Henryson also tells the fable in such a way as to impute to the mouse some very bad, indeed, habitat-jumping, motives for crossing the river. In his version of the story, the mouse, crying loudly for help at the river bank, attracts the attention of a resting paddock (frog). The frog expresses surprise at seeing the mouse near the water: "Quhat is your errand heir?" she quizzically inquires (2790). The mouse replies by saying that across the river she can see the corn, oats, barley, peas, and wheat being cultivated by humans, and that she'd like to go over there because she's tired of the "hard nuttis" (2796) she has to gnaw with her teeth, the nuts being, of course, her customary and natural diet out in the wild:

"Seis thow," quod scho, "off corne yone iolie flat,
Off ryip aitis, off barlie, peis, and quheit?
I am hungrie, and fane wald be thair at,
Bot I am stoppit be this watter greit;
And on this syde I get na thing till eit
Bot hard nuttis, quhilkis with my teith I bore:
Wer I beyond, my feist wer fer the more." (2791-97)

Thus Henryson makes explicit what the earlier fabulists were surely hinting at, namely that the mouse has no business leaving its dry meadows and woodlands in search of something better, something in this case grown with the human investment of hard work and much time. Crossing the river is tantamount here to crossing over from wild, natural space into humans' rightful territory. Before the fable has barely begun, then, the mouse has earned its medieval readers' disapproval and scorn.

Henryson embellishes the theme of natural habitat by stressing that the frog, unlike the mouse, is comfortable in her own environment; she is a creature "quhilk be nature culd douk and gaylie swym" (2788). Moreover, he has the mouse marvel aloud at the frog's specific physiological appropriateness to its watery environment:

"I haif mervell," than quod the lytill mous,
"How can thow fleit without fedder or fin?
This rever is sa deip and dangerous,
Me think that thow suld droun to wed thairin.
Tell me, thairfoir, quhat facultie or gin
Thow hes to bring the ouer this watter wan." (2805-10)

In response to the mouse's request for such information, the frog replies with a short pseudoscientific lecture on those anatomical qualities she possesses that allow her to navigate her habitat easily:

"With my twa feit," quod scho, "lukkin and braid,
In steid of airis, I row the streme full styll,
And thocht the brym be perrillous to waid,
Baith to and fra I swyme at my awin will.
I may not droun, for quhy my oppin gill
Deuoidis ay the watter I resaiff;
Thairfoir to droun, forsuith, na dreid I haif." (2812–18)

This short exchange between the mouse and the frog is instructive indeed, for the mouse is configured here as a creature ignorant of differences among animals, and thus, animal forms. Her questions strongly suggest that she sees the frog as just another mouse, though one with some special "facultie" or "gin" (appended device) allowing it to navigate a strange environment. By showing such ignorance of how God has designed animals' bodies to suit their specific niches, the mouse gives us the sense that she has never once stopped to think about "natural identity," nor has she considered the vanity of the project of assuming that all others living in the world are just slightly different versions of herself, and that their habitats and possessions are there for her invasion and enjoyment. She has a totally "muro-centric" worldview, believing that all small four-legged creatures (such as the frog) are mice like herself—but with a couple of appended devices to help them manage challenges. Moreover, by assuming that she can easily cross the river to enter the fields on the other side, the mouse blithely disregards the God-given demarcations of her own identity in order to adopt a new identity in a new environment, moving, as it were, from being a nut-eating woodland creature, to being an amphibious one, and finally, to being a consumer of cultivated grain in the human environment across the river. The mouse's failure to understand the concept of natural, bodily identity (and thus natural niche) shows that this creature is a boundary crosser, one that brings upon itself its watery death by assuming it can occupy, and then feed from, humans' cultivated fields.²⁸

28. In the appended allegorical portion of the fable's moral, Henryson figures the mouse as the human soul wanting to be carried safely across the water of the world to heaven's bliss. Yet this seemingly positive construction of the mouse does not cancel or negate the mouse's negative portrayal in the early section of the fable. On the discontinuity of the allegorical moral and the fable proper, especially that part of the fable including the mouse's and frog's early conversation, which clearly takes place before the allegorical moral can be profitably applied, see John MacQueen, *Robert Henryson: A Study of the Major Narrative Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), pp. 118–21; and Fox, *The Poems of Robert Henryson*, p. 325. Rosemary Greentree, however,

John Lydgate's version of this fable is also amplified in order to provide motives for the mouse's entrance into the water. Lydgate follows Marie de France's version of the fable fairly closely, but he develops the character of the mouse in some new directions.²⁹ He begins his fable with a longish prologue on the subject of deceit, and those familiar with the fable's general plot will surely suppose, as they read this prologue, that he has the frog's behavior in mind. And indeed, at the end of the fable, the moral of the story enlarges on the frog's deceitful actions. Yet as one gets to know the mouse, it becomes clear that Lydgate also views this creature as a paragon of deceit who uses dissembling rhetoric to cover up its theft of human food and to create an ethos about itself that is a tissue of lies. Lydgate's frog, according to its "custom" (387),³⁰ lives by the river. The mouse "soiornyd" (388) at a mill (note the difference in the way these two animals live: one sticks to its natural habitat, the other is on some sort of temporary visit to someone else's—a human's—habitat). The mouse proudly invites the frog in to tour its palatial dwelling, showing the frog the hopper, the trough, the millstone, and the corn sacks (394–95), that is, all of the material features of the human-owned mill that enable the mouse to have access to refined forms of grain. Afterwards, the mouse, to show its gentility, serves up a fancy repast of stolen flour and meal (399). "Here ys my lordshyp & dominacioun," says the mouse; "I lyue here esyly out of noyse & stryfe. / Thys cloos all hoole ys in my subieccioun" (401–3). After this arrogant and self-satisfied display of wealth and leisure, the mouse's speech takes a strange and interesting rhetorical turn. The mouse begins to poor-mouth its condition, saying, "Suffisaunce ys my possessione" (404), and "Better ys quyetie, then troble with ryches" (408), and "Blessyd be pouerte" (414), and "Nature ys content with full lytell thyng," (432), and "noman ys more free . . . Than glad pouert with small possession" (427), and "the poreman mery in hys cottage, / As ys the merchaunt in hys stuffyd house" (442–43), and "This lytyll

in "The Debate of the Paddock and the Mouse," *Studies in Scottish Literature* 26 (1991): 486, sees the conversation between the mouse and the frog as a "premortal body and soul debate"; she also sees the mouse as sympathetic, though she admits that, as the soul, the mouse's "aspirations are oddly shown as an urge for delicious food which overcomes her judgment" (p. 488). For a rhetorical reading of the fable that argues, wrongly, I think, that the mouse-as-soul is successful in entering heaven, see Colette Murphy, "Henryson's Mice: Three Animals of Style," *Poetica* 23 (1986), esp. 72–73.

29. On Lydgate's sources, see Wheatley, *Mastering Aesop*, p. 125.

30. Quotations from Lydgate's poem, entitled *Isopes Fabules*, are from the edition of Henry Noble MacCracken, *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 566–99. For examples of interpretations of this poem that overlook the mouse's questionable ethics, see Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 197, and Wheatley, *Mastering Aesop*, pp. 131–32.

mill fynt me my vytayll" (439), and "the plowman glad with bacon & potage" (444), and "though that I be but a lytell mouse" (446), and so forth. The mouse also cites two proverbs that are mordantly ironic given its own habits of stealing people's food-stores: "A poreman, that ys with lytell plesyd, / Laboreth truly . . . He may at nyght . . . Meryly slepe for any fere of theues" (409–13), and "What God sendeth, hit ys to [the poor man's] plesance" (416). There is no laboring going on here, nor is God the one who is sending the mouse its flour and meal. Thus, Lydgate's mouse is a deceitful actor, hiding its vanity and greed under a pose of virtuous poverty (and Lydgate here is surely getting across some pointed satire on the mendicants of his own day; they, too, get into your houses, claim poverty, and then take your stuff). Right before the mouse is enticed into the water by the frog, Lydgate briefly but tellingly sums up the two contrary living arrangements of the animals: "The frosshe delyteth to abyde in mory lakys, / The mowse to fede hym on chese and tencyr cakys" (475–76). Although Lydgate doesn't finally approve of either of these rascals—he calls them both "wormes," that is, "vermin" in line 474—the couplet just quoted temporarily takes the frog's side, however briefly (nobody in fable tradition ever went that far!). The frog knows and prefers its natural watery habitat, but the mouse is ever the resident alien lurking in the vicinity of someone else's food-stores, far away from its natural environment.

In our three fabulists, then, we have encountered three similar attitudes toward the mouse's invasion of human space. Medieval fables also betray a keen interest in exploring the subject of mice's natural habitats. In Northern Europe, as mentioned above, there were several different species of mice with entirely different habitats, some always living in human structures, some living solely in fields, and some living in or near forests.³¹ Albertus Magnus, the great thirteenth-century natural historian, makes it clear in his discussion of mice that there are differences between the wild and the domestic mouse; concomitantly, he sets up a two-term distinction in his naming of these types of mice: "The wild variety lives on the ground in fields . . . The other one, the domestic, lives in houses and granaries."³² Nonacademic layfolk, too, would have routinely observed these differences themselves. In the fables they seemed to attest to their observations in a couple of ways, first, by using distinguishing, often oppositional, adjectives to describe the mice in question,

31. Bielfeld, *Mice*, pp. 61–63. On the underground dwellings of the wood mouse, see W. I. Montgomery and J. Gurnell, "The Behaviour of *Apodemus*," in *The Ecology of Woodland Rodents: Bank Voles and Wood Mice*, ed. J. R. Flowerdew, J. Gurnell, and J. H. W. Gipps. Symposia of the Zoological Society of London 55 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), pp. 96–97.

32. Albertus Magnus, *On Animals: A Medieval Summa Zoologica*, trans. Kenneth F. Kitchell Jr. and Irven Michael Resnick, vol. 2 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 1524.

coupled with the recording of the mice's social relationships; and second, by discriminating carefully between the dietary differences among the mice.

In the Town Mouse and the Country Mouse,³³ for example, the adjectives used to describe the mice definitely suggest a habitat difference between those animals that live in the country and those that live with, or in close proximity to, humans. Yet they do not always force us to see a species difference being implied. In the medieval Latin tradition, Horace's *rusticus* and *urbanus* are commonly applied to the two mice, but this distinction only suggests that the mice (like people) can live in different environments, not that they are different species. Other adjectives that work in the same nonspecifying fashion include (for the country mouse) *agrarius*, *de campo*, *campestris*, *ruralis*, and (for the city mouse) *de villa*.³⁴ However, a couple of the Latin versions suggest that the mice in question are being figured as belonging to two separate species. In two Latin fables edited by Hervieux, the country mouse is called *agrestis*, implying that it lives in the fields—as does the harvest mouse, and at times, the wood mouse.³⁵ In another fable, this one an anonymous fifteenth-century version, the country mouse is called *silvestris* or *nemoris*, and it lives in a hole underneath a tree in a forest, as a wood mouse might, while the town mouse is called *domesticus*, an adjective that is usually employed to refer to those animals known to be sharply differentiated from animals living in the wild. Here, then, the word seems to be identifying the house mouse as a specific kind of creature to be distinguished from its forest-dwelling relative.³⁶ Odo of Cheriton also calls his country mouse *silvestris* and his town mouse *domesticus*.³⁷ Among the vernacular fabulists, similarly opposing terms, possibly encoding species distinctions, are sometimes used, even though a couple of versions of this fable remark that the city mouse, when it takes its trip to the country, is leaving the place where it was born and educated, suggesting that

33. This fable was almost as common as that of the Mouse and the Frog; it appears in the Greek Babrius (no. 108), Horace's *Satires* 2.6, and in over sixty Latin and thirteen vernacular versions written down between the early medieval and early modern periods. See Dicke and Grubmüller, *Die Fabeln*, pp. 618–22. It also has roots in the folk tradition; see motif no. J211.2 by Stith Thompson, *Motif Index*, and tale-type no. 112 by Aarne and Thompson, *Types*.

34. In those versions edited by Hervieux, vol. 2, the adjective *urbanus* is paired with *agrarius* (pp. 165, 199, 422, 458, 478, 519), with *agrestis* (pp. 422, 458, 660), and with *rurale* (p. 519). Many vernacular fabulists continue the trend of suggesting that the mice are of the same kind but residing in different environments. For a discussion of the adjectives used to denote these mice in two early modern printed editions, see Jacqueline de Weever, *Aesop and the Imprint of Medieval Thought: A Study of Six Fables as Translated at the End of the Middle Ages* (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland, 2011), pp. 72–97.

35. *Romulus Vindobonensis*, recensio vetus and *Vindobonae Romulae Fabulae*, recensio vetus. Both are edited by Hervieux, 2:422 and 2:458–59 respectively.

36. *Romulus LBG*, ed. Hervieux, 2:571–72.

37. Ed. Hervieux, 4:190–91. The Wolfenbüttel manuscript of the fables of Walter the Englishman uses the word *domesticus* in its title, but not in the fable proper.

it has never been anywhere other than in an urban environment.³⁸ The clearest evidence for an awareness of a possible species difference comes in those fables that make the country mouse definitely “wild,” in clear opposition to its domestic cousin. Here, we should note the French *Isopet de Lyons*, which calls the country mouse *sauvage* (47), and the German *Nuremberg Prose Aesop*, which calls the country mouse *wild* and the town mouse *haimisch*; the latter points to its domestic identity as a dweller in people’s houses.³⁹ Heinrich Steinhöwel’s fifteenth-century German translation of the fable also makes a clear distinction: his town mouse is a *husmus*, and his country mouse is a *feldmus*.⁴⁰ As far as the mice’s social relationships are concerned, the mice in most of the fables, when the one kind meets the other, are configured as being strangers, or at their closest, mere acquaintances in a formalized host–guest relationship.

The other major way in which the mice are set apart relates to their diets. From Babrius and Horace all the way to the late Middle Ages, the imagined diets of these two opposing mouse-figures clearly indicate that there was an awareness of the different habitats, or home ranges, of these mice. The country mouse is given a diet of nuts, acorns, vetch, darnel, and spelt, all of which are naturally occurring, uncultivated foods, and an occasional inferior cultivated grain such as oats or dried beans of some kind. Some of the fabulists insist that such foods are “God-given” (“*hiis que Deus ei tribuit*,” in one Latin telling, and “*ipsis a natura datam*” in another) and that they are distributed to the mice by God, Nature, or the earth.⁴¹ The town mouse, on the other hand, consistently dines on prepared foods involving human processing, such as grinding, baking, preserving, butchering, spicing, or pickling; examples of such foods include flour, figs, bacon, sausage, bread, and cheese. Thus, there is a basic distinction being drawn between raw and prepared food—showing that the mice in these fables are portrayed as feeding, even if only temporarily, from two very different spots on the food chain.⁴² All of the visiting country

38. *Romulus LBG*, ed. Hervieux, 2:571–72; and *Isopet I*, ed. Kenneth McKenzie and William Oldfather, *Ysopet-Avionnet: The Latin and French Texts*, University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature 3, no. 4 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1919), line 3.

39. Along with the other French *Ysopets*, the *Ysopet de Lyon* is edited by Julia Bastin, *Recueil Général des Isopets*, vol. 2, SATF (Paris: H. Champion, 1930), pp. 83–197; the *Nuremberg Prose Aesop* (*Nürnberger Prosa-Äsop*) is edited by Klaus Grubmüller (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994).

40. *Steinhöwels Äsop*, ed. Hermann Österley, Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart 117 (Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1873), pp. 93–94.

41. Commentary on Walter the Englishman’s version of the town mouse and the country mouse, ed. Aaron E. Wright, *The Fables of “Walter of England,”* Toronto Medieval Latin Texts (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1997), p. 48; and Österley, *Steinhöwels Äsop*, p. 93.

42. In Babrius, the country mouse eats roots and other underground food; it is entirely divorced from the human food chain by eating nothing that humans eat. Its diet is compared with

mice eagerly and voraciously eat the food served up to them by their town hosts, however, so that even though the fables show differences in the mice's *customary* diets, there is no effort to separate the mice in terms of their *preferred*, or possible, foods.

Those fabulists who do not bother to make species differentiations (i.e., most of them) are surely suggesting that one kind of mouse (the country mouse) can easily become the other (a town mouse) by simply moving from rural areas to urban ones. That is, the fables suggest that Nature does not preclude such a move, a move that is deeply threatening to humans, who are always striving to keep mice of any kind away from their stores. Lumping the species together, then, allows the fabulists to punish the mice more decisively, especially the town mouse for its transgression of human-made boundaries, but also the country mouse, for its *potential* as an invader of human space. In virtually every fable, the country mice are shown to routinely aspire to become town mice, that is, permanent residents in human homes and fields, at least until the dangers of city living are made manifest to them. One country mouse actually voices its desires to move permanently to the city: "*Dixit se non velle redire ad nemus, sed potius manere in civitate ubi habundabat deliciis.*"⁴³ Robert Henryson is perhaps the clearest proponent of the "one species" model; his country mouse is the biological sister of his town mouse, both being the fruit of the same womb, we learn, and both originating in the country. His town mouse has taken up residence in the human environment only because it has acquired merchant-guild status, and thus has "fredam . . . to ga quhair euer scho list" (174). Henryson's joke about his mouse having a mercantile license to steal works neatly, then, on both the human level of the fable's significance (merchants are thieves) and the zoological one (if it's a mouse, it's a thief, plain and simple). Moreover, he stresses in his poem that the town mouse has only recently moved there from the country, in order to be closer to the delights of the human kitchen.⁴⁴

those of ants and moles, and the poem takes place in the spring, not at harvest time. Babrius's town mouse eats stored human food (figs, cheese, honey from jars). In Horace's poem, the country mouse eats vetch, spelt, darnel, and, when it has visitors, it brings out chickpeas, long oats, a dried raisin, and a little scavenged bacon. Horace's town mouse eats crumbs on the floor but also things in trays and baskets. In the Latin fables edited by Hervieux, the country mice eat acorns, legumes, nuts, and occasionally dry grains of wheat or barley from adjacent fields. The town mice, when their diet is specified, eat meat, bread, cheese, and butter.

43. *Esopus moralizatus cum bono commento*, in Wheatley, *Mastering Aesop*, p. 210.

44. For the human point being made, namely that the new urban burghesses are merely country folk by origin, see MacQueen, *Robert Henryson*, pp. 121–22. On the differing degrees of anthropomorphism in the portrayal of the two species of mice in Henryson's fable, see Malcolm Pittock, "Animals as People—People as Animals: The Beast Story with Special Reference to Henryson's *The Two Mice* and *The Preaching of the Swallow*," in *Language and the*

In the work of medieval fabulists, then, we can not only derive knowledge about the typical objects of social satire but also identify some aspects of medieval environmental thought as well, for the fables are replete with observations about speciation, natural niches, the ordering of the nonhuman natural world, and animal-human relationships. The fables are much more than stories about people in animal costumes, as has frequently been assumed, though the anthropocentrism of the fables is never in doubt. It is this very anthropocentric bias, in fact, that sponsors such careful observation of this animal and its habitats in the first place, for each fable is based on the assumption, sometimes unspoken but always present, that mice should stay away from human food-stores. The fabulists saw the mouse's natural, God-given habitat as the country, and any mouse who wandered out of its niche to compete with humans for food deserved every bit of the punishment and bad luck that came its way.

Subject, ed. Karl Simms, *Critical Studies* 9 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), pp. 103–72. Gillian Rudd, in “Making Mention of Aesop: Henryson’s Fable of the Two Mice,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 36.1 (2006): 39–49, also raises the issue of species difference and anthropomorphism, noting especially the ways in which food defines the mice’s identities.

Toward the Common Good

Punishing Fraud among the Victualers of Medieval London¹

BARBARA A. HANAWALT

In a florid passage in *Letter Book I* (13 Henry IV. 1412), a lengthy preamble to an ordinance concerning the importation of Dutch eels, John Carpenter, the great fifteenth-century compiler of London records, described the oversight of London's food supply.

Of all cities in the West, this City of London, the most ancient, is rendered praiseworthy and famous by the governors thereof, men known to be and to have been persons of experience, and refulgent by their discreteness; and, more especially, because that at the present day its rulers do unwearidly labour to end what is for private advantage only, and to increase the public weal; nay even more than this, it is their object that, in these modern times, it may not be for anyone to rave about the supply of anything, and of victuals more especially.²

Carpenter's praise of the vigilance the mayor and aldermen exercise over the victualing trades uses language that is only slightly more exaggerated than appears in cases of fraud that came before the civic court. The mayor's oath of office concludes with "in all things which unto the mayor of the said city it pertaineth to do, as well in regulation of victuals as in all other things, well

1. Research for this essay was conducted at the Newberry Library with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

2. Henry T. Riley, ed. and trans., *Memorials of London and London Life in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Centuries* (London: Longmans, 1868), p. 580. Carpenter was at the time a clerk in the Guildhall and became town clerk five years after this date (1412).

and lawfully you shall behave yourself.”³ Carpenter’s reference to the possibility of a popular “rave” if victuals are not abundant was not an idle comment. Medieval governments knew that food shortages could give rise to unrest, and they shared in the dominant moral views of the time that the poor must be fed. As the court cases in this essay show, the mayor, sheriffs, and aldermen pursued fraud vigilantly, particularly among bakers. Contemporary poets also expressed disapproval of fraudulent practices in the victualing trade.⁴

For London and its pursuit of the common good, all contemporary media were employed to ensure a supply of good victuals. Bread, the staff of life in the Middle Ages, was most carefully watched. While statutes and ordinances spoke in emphatic language about the quality of bread and other victuals, the whole process including weighing grain, presenting freshly baked bread, and punishing fraudulent bakers was done in public so that all could see the city officials at work. In addition, each loaf was marked with a registered maker’s mark so that fraud could be traced to its source. For other victuals such as pies and roast meats and wine, a panel of experts were called to assess the comestible worth of the suspected pies. The court cases use emotive and dramatic words to describe the deceit of the perpetrators and the harm to the victims and to the reputation of the city of London. The dry, bureaucratic phrases of our regulatory services express none of these concerns for the welfare of the people at large and the reputation of the state itself. The whole process was based on the assumption of shared values that contributed to the common good. The written word was not adequate to convey the outrage of the citizens and their government when the code was broken and fraud occurred. Very public, humiliating punishments were prescribed for the offenders, including being drawn on a hurdle to the pillory. Even with all the current emphasis on literacy in the late Middle Ages, the physical messages that one could see and hear were of major importance. The interplay between oral and written, popular and high culture, official law and folk-law has been discussed in Richard Firth Green’s *A Crisis of Truth*.⁵ These all come

3. John Carpenter, *Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London*, ed. and trans. Henry T. Riley (London: City of London Corporation, 1861), p. 266.

4. In this essay I will use only writers working in English, although Gower also wrote a condemnation of fraudulent bakers in French. W. B. Wilson, ed., *Mirour de l’homme (The Mirror of Mankind)*, by John Gower (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues, 1992), pp. 341–46.

5. Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). Green takes as a base for his study the work of Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066–1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993) but moves the story forward into the late fourteenth century. London in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries kept many of its oral traditions. Oaths were still permitted to clear a person’s reputation, and oral recitations of the city’s ordinances were also used to inform the illiterate about London’s laws.

into play, along with the material evidence, in punishing the perpetrators of fraud in medieval London.

Turning first to the written word, what motivated the writers of ordinances covering food or those recording the court cases that arose from violations? James Davis, an economic historian, has argued for market morality in medieval business. He has made a strong case for internalized, informal constraints that influenced people's market choices. These informal constraints went beyond regulations and enforcement procedures and were shared, self-imposed codes of behavior. Indeed, these shared moral values made enforcement easier because the expectation was that those participating in the market conformed to the norms. Thus formal laws and ordinances worked in tandem with the internal constraints. Rational self-interest impelled people to follow the code of behavior because they feared that failure to do so could lead to a loss of business partners in reciprocal arrangements and at worst result in legal sanctions against them. Because the markets depended on shared values, outsiders such as aliens, foreigners, and hucksters, who were beyond the social constraints, were looked at with particular suspicion. For those who did not participate in the consensus about values, ostracism, physical or financial punishment, and eviction from the city were essential. Davis investigates the ways that the shared values of the marketplace arose from the culture of the society at large. He cites sermon literature, wall paintings on parish churches, poetry, and the very language of the laws and the court cases that expressed the indignation against those who violated the dominant morality.⁶

Carpenter's lengthy preamble that begins this chapter expresses the market morality concisely. He establishes the honor of the city as having been founded by Brut. This founding myth was a staple in London's identity, which permitted it to trace its origin back to Troy and the grandson of one of the dispersed Trojans.⁷ He goes on to describe the perfection of behavior expected of magistrates: discreet, diligent, and dedicated to the commonweal. These virtues of probity were thought to be desirable among the merchants and craftsmen of the city as well. The Dutch aliens, the outsiders, were selling medium-sized eels for large eels and small eels for medium-sized ones, and this was "found to be very pernicious." The mayor, together with the aldermen, provided a "fitting and opportune remedy" with an ordinance concerning the sale of eels that was "pleasing of God, and for the common good and profit of the people of the city of London, and of all other persons repairing there unto." The entry in the Letter Book sums up the moral assumptions

6. James Davis, *Medieval Market Morality: Life, Law and Ethics in the English Market Place* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). See particularly chap. 1.

7. *Liber Albus*, p. 54 includes the founding myth.

governing the market as well as the behavior expected of the people living in the city and trading there. Both God and the people must be served.

As Davis points out, nowhere were the moral assumptions about the marketplace more important and more often vocalized than the provision of bread and other victuals for the population.⁸ Bread, particularly that made from wheat, was the staple of the English diet, providing most of the caloric intake of the population.⁹ In both the countryside and the cities, bread was baked for sale rather than being baked in the home. Only the wealthiest London houses had facilities for a bake oven. Many people lived in rooms in the upper stories of the houses and could not have fires. They relied on bakers for their bread and also for roasted meats, meat pies, and other prepared foods.¹⁰ City officials had reason to be concerned about both the supply of bread and the wholesomeness of victuals in their cities for fear of bread riots. The city was not alone in needing to regulate the quality of bread. In the thirteenth century the Crown mandated the Assize of Bread and Ale, requiring that standards be met for the weight of bread and the quality of the ale, the two staples of the English diet.¹¹ Violations of the Assize of Ale in London did not involve quality but rather the measures and the prices. Those who sold short measure did not cause nearly the disapprobation that bakers did.¹²

8. James Davis, "Baking for the Common Good: A Reassessment of the Assize of Bread in Medieval England," *The Economic History Review*, n.s., 57.3 (2004): 481–85. He points out that the theory of just prices not only was a theological position but also was assumed by the royal government. Bakers had to make some profit, but not excessive profit.

9. Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c. 1200–1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 151–54. The nutritional need of a modern Western adult male is 2,000 to 3,000 kilocalories per day. Bread and ale made up a large proportion of calorie intake. See Bruce M. S. Campbell, James A. Galloway, Derek Keene, and Margaret Murphy, *A Medieval Capital and Its Grain Supply: Agrarian Production and Distribution in the London Region c. 1300*, Historical Geography Research Series 30 (London: Institute of British Geographers, 1993), pp. 31–36. These researchers estimate that 75 percent of the diet was grains. Ten percent of the grain calories were consumed as ale. Given the poor water quality, ale was a safe drink. It was often small ale of a low alcohol content. In London, brown-bread bakers outnumbered white-bread makers, an indication that most of the population ate brown bread.

10. Martha Carlin, "Putting Dinner on the Table in Medieval London," in *London and the Kingdom: Essays in Honour of Caroline M. Barron*, ed. Matthew Davies and Andrew Prescott, Proceedings of the 2004 Harlaxton Symposium (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2008), pp. 58–77.

11. The writ appears in *Calendar of Letter Books Preserved in the City of London, Letter Book A*, ed. R. R. Sharpe (London: John Edward Francis, 1899), p. 312 (November 18, 1281). Hereafter the letter books are designated by their alphabetic title.

12. Ralph Hanna III, "Brewing Trouble: On Literature and History—and Alewives," in Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace, eds., *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 1–17.

The administration of the Assize of Bread and Ale varied little across England. Tables for the Assize were recorded in town documents. One of the most complete is that of the Oak Book of Southampton.¹³ The idea was to control the price of a farthing loaf of bread since that coin was the smallest one in circulation and thus keep bread available to the poor. A farthing would buy a loaf of wastel, the most common wheat bread. Since the price of grain varied considerably from harvest to harvest, the weight of the loaf would vary as well. When the price of wheat went up, the weight of the farthing loaf went down, so that in times of bad harvest the consumer would get less bread for his or her farthing. The Assize made no attempt to control the price of grain, but concentrated on regulating the supply of bread and ale. The moral imperative behind the legislation was to make sure that the poor would have access to the staff of life.¹⁴

Wastel was made with wheat flour that had been bolted (sieved). It was wastel that the Prioress fed to her little dogs (I.147), so one knows that it was of fine quality.¹⁵ The best-quality white bread was simnel (*panis Dominicus*, or *demaine*, or *pandemaigne*). It was pale cream in color because it contained wheat germ, but it did not have bran in it. It was twice-bolted wheat. The name *panis Dominicus* came from the effigy of the Savior on the loaf. The bread was boiled before it was baked, or it was baked twice. Chaucer used the white appearance of the bread to describe the complexion of Sir Thopas: "White was his face as payndemayne" (VII.725). French bread, or "pouf," was to be of the same quality and bolting as wastel but had the addition of milk and eggs. Cocket was a cheaper white bread, not bolted, but with the bran removed, and tourte was a brown bread of wheat with husks in it and perhaps peas and beans as well. A bread of rye and wheat was called maslin. And finally, there was horse bread, coarse bread made from peas, beans, and intended for horses but perhaps also eaten by the very poor. The bread hierarchy matched the hierarchy of social status. The wealthy had white bread, and those of the lower ranks ate brown bread.¹⁶ The Assize regulated only

13. Alan S. C. Ross, "The Assize of Bread," *The Economic History Review* 9.2 (1956): 332–422.

14. Davis, "Baking for the Common Good," pp. 469–71. For the legal background of the Assize, see Gwen Seabourne, "Assize Matters: Regulation of the Price of Bread, in Medieval London," *The Journal of Legal History* 27.1 (2006): 29–52.

15. All quotations of Chaucer are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), cited by fragment and line number.

16. *Liber Albus*, pp. 305–6. *Letter Book H*, pp. 106–7 for instructions to the White Bread and Tourtes makers. P. W. Hammond, *Food and Feast in Medieval England* (Gloucestershire, UK: Alan Sutton, 1993), p. 48. For a more extensive analysis of bread types, see H. E. Salter, ed., *Medieval Archives of the University of Oxford*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1921), pp. 129–42.

wastel, but the weight and prices of the other breads followed the same market-value strategy. In London the more sophisticated market also required regulation over pouf and demeine bread. Pouf had to be of the same weight as wastel, and a half-penny of demeine should weigh the same as a farthing loaf of wastel.¹⁷

Control over the supply of bread began with milling the grain. London had elaborate regulations for the milling and bread-baking. The opportunities for fraud were numerous, so that careful scrutiny was essential. As they were reiterated in 1419, "By virtue of the first writ the good men of the city had ordained the punishment of the hurdle for bakers offending against the Assize of Bread and for millers who stole corn." To catch dishonest millers the city weighed all corn sent out of the city to be milled and also weighed all the flour coming back into the city. This was to "prevent the practices of mixing chalk, white sand and bran with the flour." The city maintained weights, balances, and weighing houses and charged the millers one half-penny for each quarter (8 bushels) weighed.¹⁸ Millers who were guilty of stealing flour or other frauds had their mill horse impounded. The owner of the mill had to pay to redeem the horse and make satisfaction for the stolen flour. The guilty miller was to be put to the hurdle. If both the owner and the miller showed contempt, "all persons shall be forbidden to go to his mill with corn for grinding until such satisfaction shall have been made."¹⁹ In other words, having failed to come into line with the regulations and the moral business mentality, the mill owner and the miller were to be denied trade.

Using humor rather than outright castigation, Chaucer's two descriptions of thieving millers appeal to the prejudices of his audience. The Prologue describes the Miller as a thief charging for corn three times the value of grinding it: "Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries / And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee" (I.562–63).²⁰ The tricks of a thieving miller appears again in the Reeve's Tale: "A theef he was for sothe of corn and mele / And that a sly, and usaunt for to stele" (I.3939–40). The Reeve tells a story of two young students at a Cambridge College, Soler Hall, who go to the miller's

17. *Liber Albus*, p. 305.

18. *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls Preserved among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London*, vol. 1, 1313–1364, ed. A. H. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), p. 5 (1324). For 1298 the king ordered that all corn that was ground in mills within or without the city be weighed before being ground, and the millers were to answer in light weight in flour coming from the mills. Riley, ed., *Memorials*, p. 37.

19. *Liber Albus*, p. 307.

20. The note on these lines in *The Riverside Chaucer* suggests that the miller's golden thumb is from a proverb stating that there are no honest millers. I wonder, rather, if it is not that the miller put his thumb on the scale and pushed it down when weighing flour.

house because he has been cheating the manciple of their college. They plan to observe the miller closely, but the miller has a strategy of his own. “The moore queynte crekes that they make / The moore wol I stele when I take / In stide of flour yet wold I yeve him bren / The grettest clerkes been noght wisest men” (I.4051–54). The miller releases the warden’s horse, and while the students chase it across the fens, he makes good his plan.

The manciple from an inn of court would never have let the miller get away with such tricks. “For to be wise in byynge of vitaille / For wheither that he payde or took by taille / Algate he wayted so in his achaat / That he was ay biforn and in good staat” (I.569–72). The role of the manciple was important in dealing with cheaters in the victualing trade. Oxford University had such a problem with the city bakers that the university got permission from the king to administer the Assize of Bread. The university colleges were the primary buyers, and they had accused the city of colluding with the bakers to cheat them.²¹

To comply with the Assize of Bread and Ale, London appointed four assayers to determine the weight of bread each year. Coming to the Guildhall, they took an oath before the mayor and aldermen to do the assay well and faithfully “for the profit of the common people of the city and for others coming there.” At the feast of St. Michael (Michaelmas or September 29), the men were “to buy three quarters of corn, one namely upon the Pavement of the Chepe, one at Greschirche or at Billyngesgate, and a third at Queen-Hythe.” In other words, they were to buy grain at the various grain markets from the year’s harvest. The assayers were not connected to baking or milling, but rather came from a variety of trades. They might serve a number of years in this capacity, indicating that they had acquired an expertise in calculating the ratio of a quarter of grain to the number of loaves. Assaying was such an important position that many of the assayers were aldermen or later became civic officials such as chamberlains, sheriffs, and even mayors.²² The prestige of their membership indicates the importance that the city put on the assay and suggests that some of the men carrying out the assay were also responsible for the rhetoric of the court cases. These were men who might write up the cases or influence the wording of ordinances. Their position carried both legal and moral authority.

21. Salter, ed., *Medieval Archives of the University of Oxford*, 2:138–39. In Oxford, which has a series of records for the Assize of Bread from 1309 to 1335, 163 cases were for deficient weight of wastrel, and in 199 cases the cocket bread was too light. These were the most common breads. The high-quality simnel bread was underweight in only fourteen instances, and the low-quality dark bread was underweight in ninety cases. In Oxford the bakers were fined for deficiencies in weight and, as in London, were drawn on the hurdle as repeat offenders.

22. Seabourne, “Assize Matters,” pp. 35–36.

After the Feast of St. Michael these assayers gave the grain to bakers to make “wastrel, light bread, and brown bread.” After baking the bread, “with great diligence” they were to present the hot loaves to the mayor and aldermen, who were to weigh them while still hot. The weight of the loaves was used to calculate how many half-penny loaves could be baked from a quarter of grain, calculating the price of the grain in half-pennies. These loaves, then, became the standard weight for the sale of bread of these qualities in the city for the year. The price of the loaf was determined by the price of grain and taking into consideration the expenses in producing the bread. In other words, the bakers were allowed a profit from their baking of 9 1/4 pence in addition to bran.²³ The process was hardly an exact science, but it endured into the eighteenth century and obviously offered stability for the bread market. The public nature of the assay offered a visible reassurance to consumers of the effectiveness of the civic government and gave transparency to the process. It advertised the honesty expected in providing a basic staple and made clear that those not following the prescriptions of the assay would be punished.²⁴

In addition to weight and quality of bread, the bakers had other restrictions on their production. So that each loaf could be traced to its maker, a baker had to have an individual seal that he could impress on his loaves “so that the same may be more easily and readily known.” Bakers of white bread were not to bake brown bread, and vice versa. The bread had to be sold from a basket in the market and not at the baker’s house or at his oven.²⁵ Bakers were to give hucksters thirteen loaves for twelve, or “a baker’s dozen.”²⁶

Oversight of bread production and bakers was strict, with bakers submitting hot loaves for inspection once a month. Suitable punishments were outlined in the *Liber Custumarum*. A baker making bread that was bad or light in weight would be drawn on a hurdle through the greatest streets from the Guildhall to the baker’s house, with the faulty loaf hanging from his neck. For a second offense, he would be drawn on a hurdle through the great street of the Chepe to the pillory on Cornhill, where he would stand for an hour. The

23. *Liber Albus*, p. 302.

24. Davis, “Baking for the Common Good,” pp. 71–76. He concludes that the bakers got adequate recompense for their labors making and selling bread. Another entry permitted adjustments depending on the variation of the price of grain sold over the year. The assay of bread would not be done again that year, but bakers were given regulations that would permit them to adjust the quantity of loaves made per quarter of grain according to the price. If grain went up in price, bakers could produce loaves of bread at a lighter weight than was established for the year. *Liber Albus*, pp. 304–5, 308.

25. *Liber Albus*, pp. 231, 308–10, 314–15.

26. *Letter Book H*, pp. 106–7.

third offense called for the forfeiture of the whole oven of bread to the king. The fourth offense led the loss of the oven of bread and expulsion from the trade of bakers.²⁷ Only the most egregious cases and recidivist received the humiliating and economically devastating punishments; others were warned and fined.²⁸

In the apprehension and punishment of bakers committing fraud, the combination of the written text deploring their practices and the visual example of the hurdling and pillorying of offenders come together. The ride on the hurdle and time on the pillory gave the public, literate and illiterate, an opportunity to see and hear the offender's punishment. Rough music accompanied the spectacle so that a crowd could quickly assemble. Helen Carrel has pointed to the medieval preference for carrying out punishments in the arena in which the offense was committed and in front of the victims. Victualers, therefore, were punished in public.²⁹ Seabourne notes that the illustration at the beginning of the *Liber de Assisa Panis* shows a prosperous man at his oven, but in the next picture he is bareheaded, unshod, with his hands and feet bound, and being dragged on the hurdle; the offending dough is hanging from his neck. The exposure of his flesh, the bare head and feet, was typical of medieval humiliation rituals. The pillories are also illustrated and appear to be tall enough for people to easily see the offender. There are holes for both hands and the head, and a board across the upright beam for the person to stand on. Women were allowed a seated pillory, called a thew. Seabourne concludes that the humiliating punishment was meant to bring the proud and prosperous baker down.³⁰ While Davis concludes that the provision of the Assize of Bread did make provision for a decent living for the bakers, they were not among the best-paid urban craftsmen.³¹ The Bakers Gild ranked nineteenth in order of precedence among the livery companies of London. While the punishment

27. *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis: Liber Custumarum Compiled in the Early Part of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Henry Thomas Riley, vol. 2, pt. 2 (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), pp. 598–99. Seabourne, “Assize Matters,” found that some bakers did have their ovens torn down, but expulsion did not follow (p. 47). Perhaps the authorities were concerned about protecting the bread supply.

28. Sylvia Thrupp, *The Worshipful Company of Bakers: A Short History* (London: Galleon, 1933), pp. 42–43.

29. Helen Carrel, “The Ideology of Punishment in Late Medieval English Towns,” *Social History* 34.3 (2009): 301–20.

30. Seabourne, “Assize Matters,” pp. 43–48. She found that some of the offenders rode the hurdle backwards.

31. Davis, “Baking for the Common Good,” pp. 473–79 and throughout the rest of the article. In the thirteenth century, the pay of nine and a quarter pence was quite good compared with that for a skilled carpenter, who got three pence a day. The problem was that the formula had not changed even in the fifteenth century. Thrupp, *Worshipful Company of Bakers*, p. 1.

of the hurdle and stocks was degrading and painful, the additional economic punishment must have hurt as well. Consumers would know not to buy bread from the offender.

Despite the harsh punishment the law provided, a poem fragment attributed to John Lydgate spelled out worse punishment for thieving millers and bakers. His recommendation for the pillory is one that had a hole for the head and arm holes so wide that the offenders would be uncomfortable. Eggs should be thrown at the thieves until they were completely “gilded.”

Put out his hed / lyst not for to dare,
 But lyk a man / upon that tour a-byde,
 For Cast of eggs / wil no oonys spare,
 Tyl he be quaylled / body, bak, and syde,
 His heed endooryd / and, of verray pryde,
 Put out his Armyes / shewith abrood his face,
 The fenestrals / be made for hym so wyde,
 Cleymyth to been / a capteyn of that place.

He would not spare youth or the middle aged and advised leaving them to hang there.³² William Langland also advised punishment of brewers, bakers, butchers, and cooks on pillories and “pynynge stooles” because they poison people.³³

Moving from the visual and oral punishments to the written word, the cases cited in the city records show what Davis has described as the moral culture that indicates market constraints. The language reflects the disapprobation of violations to presumed good business practices. In the case of John Bird’s fraud in 1327, the wording illustrates the emotional implications for the community at large of a baker cheating his customers and the sense of violation of trust. On June 4, 1327, Bird was attached to answer “certain falsehood, malice, and deceit [*falsitate, malitia, et deceptione*] by him committed to the nuisance of the common people.” His falsehood consisted of “skillfully and artfully” causing a hole to be made on his table, called a molding board, on which he kneaded the dough and made loaves. The hole was designed like a mousetrap with a wicket that could be opened or closed. When his neighbors

32. Frederick J. Furnivall, ed., *Political, Religious, and Love Poems*, Early English Text Society, o.s., 15 (London: Pub. for the Early English Text Society by Trübner, 1866), p. 56. See also John Lydgate, *Minor Poems*, ed. James Orchard Halliwell (London: Printed for the Percy Society by T. Richards, 1840), p. 207.

33. *Piers Plowman: The B Version, Will’s Visions of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better, and Do-Best*, ed. George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson (London: Athlone Press, 1976), 3:78–84.

brought dough or materials for making bread to him to form into loaves and bake, he would hide one of his servants under the table. The servant would open the wicket and when John kneaded the bread, the servant would “falsely, wickedly [*necquiter*] and maliciously” collect bits of dough until he had a great deal of dough. The loaves he baked were underweight according to the standards of the Assize of Bread. This practice was “to the great loss of all his neighbors and persons living near, and of others who had come to him with such dough to bake.” But it was also “to the scandal and disgrace of the whole city” [*scandalum et dedecus*] and especially the mayor and bailiffs who were charged with keeping the Assize.

Brought before the court, Bird denied the “fraud [*fraude*], malice, and deceit.” Seven bakers and two bakeresses were also found to have practiced the same fraud. The jurors found them guilty as charged. The mayor and aldermen concluded that the matter be judged as a species of theft and that it was “neither consonant with right nor pleasing to God that such falsehood, deceit, and malice shall go unpunished.” The tables were to be utterly destroyed, and the offenders would be drawn through the street on a hurdle with some of the dough hanging around their necks. They were to stand at the pillory for a day until Vespers at St. Paul’s cathedral. If they committed the offense again, they would have to stand at the pillory for the whole day and be expelled from the city.³⁴

The most common offense was selling underweight bread. Some of this bread came from outside the city. Bakers from Totenham were ordered to sell their bread for less, so that a loaf that cost 3d. would have to be sold for 2 1/2 d. Rather than coming themselves, they sent their wives to sell bread, because the women were less likely to be punished.³⁵ Other bakers were punished for selling tourt bread that was of deficient weight.³⁶ But the city court could be lenient as well. John Tonard, arrested for selling bread of deficient weight, was spared the hurdle because it was a first offense. When he offended again, however, he was condemned to the hurdle.³⁷ Another baker was too old to undergo the rigors of the hurdle and was forbidden to bake unless he could find someone else to undergo the punishment for him.³⁸ No one volunteered.

34. *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis: Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum, et Liber Horn*, ed. Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1857), 3:416–17. See also *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, 2:44. *Memorials*, pp. 162–65. The two women were to remain in Newgate prison until it was ascertained if their husbands were responsible for their actions.

35. *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, 1:97 (1332).

36. *Letter Book I*, p. 53 (1406).

37. *Letter Book K*, p. 56 (1425). Another baker made his bread from water from his house that was so foul “that his bread was a great danger and nuisance of all men who eat it.”

38. *Liber Albus*, p. 308.

The other offense in selling bread was adding filth to it, thus providing bulk but also making it unwholesome. To avoid the introduction of foreign matter into bread, a London ordinance forbade bakers to start their fires with ferns, stubble, straw, or reeds.³⁹ But the potential impurities that might enter into bread from these practices pale in comparison to some of the charges that appear in the Assize. John de Strode was accused of making bread that contained filth and cobwebs, and Richard Heyne not only sold short weight, but also mixed sand in his bread. Both were forced to stand at the pillory. Heyne had the offending bread carried before him on a lance.⁴⁰ William de Somerset sold bread that was “putrid, and all together rotten, and made of putrid wheat, so that persons by eating that bread would be poisoned and choked.”⁴¹

Horse bread, loaves made with beans and peas with bran but no grain, could be fraudulently sold also.⁴² Since horse bread was not covered by the Assize, cheating was rampant among hostellers who bought bread in Southwark or made bread in their own ovens. A city ordinance directed them to buy horse bread from city bakers and to insure the quality with the maker’s mark on it.⁴³ Richard le Young was accused of a number of fraudulent practices for which he was put to the hurdle. He had sold horse bread without the proper baker’s mark and sold loaves of lightweight using a false peck measure.⁴⁴ A baker who sold sixteen loaves of deficient horse bread was paraded on a hurdle with a loaf of the bread hanging from his neck in the front and a bundle of hay on his back.⁴⁵

Bakers did not take punishment for their fraud passively. In 1331 an ordinance complained that the bakers hid themselves, “like foxes,” in mills outside the city so that they could not be prosecuted for their false bread, and that they had their servants bake and sell the loaves instead. The ordinance was proclaimed in the street so that people knew to mistrust those bakers.⁴⁶ One baker, Richard Davy, who underwent the discomfort and humiliation of riding the hurdle accompanied by rough music, got off the hurdle at his home,

39. *Ibid.*, p. 308.

40. Riley, *Munimenta*, 3:415–16, 420–21.

41. *Memorials*, p. 90. One customer complained that he had bought black bread from a maker of white bread, but that it contained ashes and filth. The baker claimed that his servants had produced the bread and that those loaves had been made to protect the white bread in the oven from the heat. The jury was unmoved by this argument, and the mayor sentenced the baker to the hurdle and the servants to the pillory. Riley, *Munimenta*, 3:425–26, 428–29.

42. *Letter Book H*, pp. 106–7.

43. *Memorials*, p. 323.

44. Riley, *Munimenta*, 3:424. For another case see p. 425, in which a foreigner was drawn on the hurdle through Chepe to Temple Bar.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 425–26.

46. *Memorials*, pp. 180–83.

went inside, and came out with a big bone, which he threw at the tabor and broke it through the middle.⁴⁷ Another baker accused the mayor and aldermen of lying about the quality of his bread and was forced to stand with a whetstone around his neck at the pillory.⁴⁸

Bread was the staple of the diet, but other baked goods and ingredients were of major importance.⁴⁹ FitzStephen's well-known description of twelfth-century London praises the public cook shops and the ready availability of food. "On a daily basis there, depending on the season, can be found fried or boiled foods and dishes, fish large and small, meat—lower quality for the poor, finer cuts for the wealthy—game and fowl (large and small)." Unexpected guests can "pay a quick visit to the riverside, where anything they might desire is immediately available. No matter how great a number . . . or at whatever hour of day or night, so that those arriving do not have to go without a meal for too long or those departing leave on empty stomachs, they can choose to detour there and take whatever refreshment each needs." Geese, guinea-hens, woodcock, and other delicacies are all readily available. "This is an exemplar of a public cook shop that provides a service to a city and is an asset to city life."⁵⁰

The description of the Cook in the Prologue would appear to carry on the tradition that FitzStephen praised. "He koude rooste, and seethe, and broille, and frey / Maken mortreux, and well bake a pye" (I.383–84). But Chaucer hints at the duplicity of cook-shop owners when he has the Host accuse the Cook of selling fraudulent pies. "For many a paste hastow laten blood / And many a Jakke of Doveze hastow sold / That hath been twies hoot and twies coold" (I.4346–48). These were meat pies that were not sold the day they were made, but the gravy was taken off and they were reheated for sale the next day. The Host further accuses the Cook of selling geese to pilgrims that were fed on stubble rather than on grain. These people were passing through London and could not stay to complain. Furthermore, the shop is full of flies. The cook does not deny the charge (I.4348–57).

The city relied on expert cooks to decide whether cooked food was wholesome. When Robert de Pokebrokie, a chaplain, complained that Henry de

47. *Calendar of Early Mayor's Court Rolls Preserved among the Archives of the Corporation of City of London at the Guildhall, a.d. 1298–1307*, ed. A. H. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924), p. 67.

48. *Memorials*, p. 423.

49. Martha Carlin, "Fast Food and Urban Living Standards in Medieval England," in Martha Carlin and J. Rosenthal, *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe* (London: Hambledon, 1998), pp. 27–51.

50. William FitzStephen, *Norman London*, with an essay by Sir Frank Stenton and introduction by F. Donald Logan (New York: Italica, 1990), pp. 48–60.

Walmesford, a cook, had sold him veal that was “hashed up, stinking and abominable to the human race, to the scandal and opprobrium of the City and the manifest danger of the plaintiff and his friends,” six cooks testified independently that the meat was good. The mayor and aldermen had a further examination, and all experts testified that the meat was “good and wholesome.”⁵¹ On the other hand, Henry Pecche prosecuted Henry de Passelewe, a cook, in 1351 for selling him two capons baked in pastry that were putrid. Pecche and his guests, who were hungry, ate through almost the whole of the first pastry before they discovered that it was “putrid and stinking.” Henry Pecche opened the second one and found that it was as well. Pecche protested that Henry de Passelewe had sold putrid and stinking capons that were “an abomination to mankind, to the scandal, contempt, and disgrace of all the city” and risked the life of the plaintiff and his friends. The cook said that they were good when he sold them. The court brought in “good and trusty men of the trade” of pie-bakers to examine the second capon. They concluded that the birds were rotten when they were sold. Henry de Passelewe was to be taken to the pillory with the capon carried before him, and he was to stay there for the space of one league’s journey in the day, and a public announcement was to be made at the pillory about his offense.⁵²

Cooks and pie-bakers were sworn to inspect their trade periodically to make sure that the prices were reasonable and the food healthy. They were to report offenses to the mayor and aldermen.⁵³ In 1379 a special ordinance was passed pointing out that the pastelers of the city have “baked in pasties rabbits, geese, and garbage (giblets) not befitting and sometimes stinking, in deceit of the people and have baked beef in pasties and sold the same for venison.” A schedule of punishments was proclaimed for those who sold such pies.⁵⁴

With lack of refrigeration, poultry, meat, and fish could quickly become unfit to eat. For those who sold putrid fowl, meat, and fish, the usual punishment was a public proclamation of the deficiency of the items, a time standing at the pillory, and the punishment of having the spoiled birds or fish burned under their noses.⁵⁵ For example, John Russelle was accused of trying to sell

51. *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, 1:251 (1355).

52. *Memorials*, pp. 266–67.

53. *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, 2:163 (1373). Sometimes the cooks and pie-bakers also inspected ingredients before they were cooked. Thus a poulterer was found by two pie-bakers and five cooks to be selling pigeons that were unfit to eat. *Letter Book G*, p. 176 (1365). See also *Memorials*, p. 328.

54. *Memorials*, p. 438.

55. *Letter Book F*, pp. 226–27 (1350–51); also in the *Memorials*, p. 266. *Letter Book G*, pp. 173 (1364), 175 (1364), and 192 (1365); *Letter Book H* (1375–99), p. 110 (1378).

thirty-seven pigeons that were “putrid, rotten, stinking and abominable to the human race” as well as being a disgrace to the city. The poulterers who were called to testify found that the pigeons were rotten, and the sentence was that they should be burned under John’s nose as he stood at the pillory.⁵⁶

Among the victualing trades that Chaucer ridicules, that of the vintner is notably absent. Although wine plays a major role in *The Canterbury Tales*, no hint that it might be spoiled or fraudulently doctored ever emerges. Was Chaucer too close to the trade, coming as he did from a long line of London vintners, to make a joke about how to turn bad wine into good? London was very concerned about bad wine, as a number of cases in the court books show. In 1419 the city passed an ordinance that virtually gives a recipe for making fraudulent wine. The ordinance complained, “For as moch as many gret, now a dayes and long tyme hertofore, bothe Englisshmen and aliens, in comone harme of alle the peple, and gret sclaundre of this City, naught charginge her owne untrouth and disceyt, daylich usyn within this Citee thair wyne of Spayne, Rochell, and other remenauntz of brokyn, sodyn, reboyllid, and unthriftly wyne of other contrees, whan thei are feblyd in colour, and noght in value, to put yn diuers buttys and othir vessels, that are here rasyd and gummyd with picche, code, and othir horrible and unholsome things, for to reduce and bryng ayen, in dissceyte of the peple, a plausant colour to the sight, and a liykly manere drynkyng of Romeney to the smell and taste.” In this method they “sophisticate” and “counterfeit” the wine so that it tastes and looks like a Romeney. Any coopers who prepared the barrels for this purpose should be punished. The wine is to be confiscated and thrown in the gutter, the offender to be fined and taken to the pillory. Two years after this ordinance, William Horold followed the recipe and made false Romeney. “Therefor the Meir and Aldermen, wyllyng that euery man the rather shold eschewe such falsnes and disceyt in tyme coming, haue aftir the fourme of the aforseyd Ordenaunce awardid, that he shal stonde here on the pillory this day an hour.”⁵⁷

An inquest in 1427 held before the mayor and aldermen put the vintners under oath to tell the truth about Gerard Galganet, an alien, who had “sophisticated” wine. He had six casts of old wine from La Rochelle. It was pale in color and of bad taste. To these he added new Spanish wine, and then he “colored, composed, and sophisticated them with wine cooked and colored to give them a pleasant appearance and delectable taste.” These he put into thirteen butts “which had been smeared and lined with diverse gums and resins

56. *Memorials*, pp. 328, 448.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 670–72. *Letter Book I*, pp. 214–15.

(*cum diversis gummis et Rasis . . . uctis et linitis*)” with the result that it tasted of a good Romeney wine. With recipes like this, he was able to sophisticate a number of other wines as well. The jurors condemned him for his “deception of the king’s people and . . . contempt of the good ordinances of the city.”⁵⁸ A foreign merchant and a couple of “coupers” were accused of “falsely and decevably contrefeted coloured dubbed and medled vi pipes of white Rochell wyne olde and feble of colour and tast thenne in the celer of the said Austyn there beyng with rede wyne called teynt and with eggs alom gummes and othere horrible and unholsome thinges for to induce and bring ageyn a pleasant color to the sight and liklky maner drinking of rede wyne to the tarrage smelle and taste of the people,” contrary to the ordinance.⁵⁹

Those taverners who knowingly sold bad wine were severely punished. John Penrose was convicted of selling red wine to the common people “to the shameful disgrace of the officers of the city.” While there was a call to have him imprisoned for a year and a day, instead he was sentenced to drink a draught of the wine at the pillory and have the remainder poured over his head. He was also expelled from the vintners guild.⁶⁰

Food is important to the stability of a society, but perhaps more so in conditions where scarcity is a constant threat. Fraud, on the other hand, seems to be always with us. Poets could joke about cheating millers and pie-bakers or prescribe violent punishment, but city officials had to deal with the realities of detection and punishment. To explore their thinking, we have a written record of their highly emotive language. What permeates the city ordinances and the wording of the cases themselves is a sense of the reputation of the city and the common good of the population. For the city officials a broader sense of civic values and civic pride assumed dominance in the language of their records. They had some abstract ideas about purity of the body politic as well as the bodies of the citizenry. Bad bread, sophisticated wine, and poison pies were bad for the reputation of the city, bad for the health of inhabitants, and a disgrace to elected officials. It was horrible, abominable, foul, unhealthy, and fraudulent to produce bad products, and they did not hesitate to use such language. As Davis has argued, the concept of the common good relied on a shared culture of market morality. Often the language speaks of fraudulent foods as offensive to God, or to the dishonor of the city and its officials, or to the deceit of the populace. The tone of the remarks is

58. *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls*, 4:212 (1427). He was also accused of sophisticating ten casks of unsound La Rochelle wine and of having sophisticated eight casks of old, sour-sweet Spanish wine. He was a “common sophisticator.”

59. *Letter Book K*, p. 377 (1457).

60. *Memorials*, p. 318 (1364). He was later reinstated.

very much that of Langland or Lydgate, reflecting commonly shared values of the marketplace and abhorrence at the violations of these values.

The records we have examined show the interplay of the written, official law and folk-law. The written accounts of the cases try to reinforce expected modes of behavior in their choice of words and spoke to mores of the urban elite. The folk-law elements in these punishments, identified by Green, took the didactic lessons of the hurdle and stocks beyond the written word into the popular, public arena.⁶¹ Sentences were pronounced and read at the pillory and sometimes also announced as the person was paraded on the hurdle.⁶² The city imposed very public spectacles of humiliation that indicated to consumers whose products to avoid. The hurdle was an education to present and future perpetrators as well as consumers about the city's dietary and behavioral standards. The written, oral, and visual (accompanied by rough music) all carried the city's message of food standards and behavior.

61. Green, *A Crisis of Truth*, pp. 191–92.

62. Riley, *Munimenta*, 3:421.

PART FOUR

New Media and the Literate Laity

The Ignorance of the Laity

Twelve Tracts on Bible Translation

NICHOLAS WATSON

During the second half of the fourteenth century, a series of shifts seems to have taken place in representations of that perennial topic, the ignorance of the laity. The mass of baptized humanity lumped together as lay by ecclesiological theory, comprising more than nine-tenths of Christian society, had always been classified as ignorant, in the way their formal status as sheep, meek objects of the church's "pastoral" teaching, required. Two synonyms for *laicus* (from Greek λαϊκός, *populace*), used across a range of clerical settings, were *illiteratus* and *idiotus*. But despite the fact that it was constitutive of lay identity, ignorance was always also understood as a spiritual problem. From the late twelfth to the mid-fourteenth centuries in particular, it became a major concern of the English episcopate to find more systematic ways to push back ignorance by defining a syllabus of necessary truths for curates to teach their parishioners and encouraging their further dissemination by household heads, parents, godparents, and teachers.¹ While there are others, the brief pulpit address known as *The Lay Folks' Catechism*, written in 1357 by John Gaytryge for John Thoresby, archbishop of York, in order to disseminate knowledge of the "sixe thinges" the work defines as "the

1. See, for example, L. E. Boyle, "The *Oculus Sacerdotis* and Some Other Works of William of Pagula," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 5 (1955): 81–110; R. M. Haines, "Education in English Ecclesiastical Legislation of the Later Middle Ages," *Studies in Church History* 7 (1971): 161–75; *Pastors and the Care of Souls in Medieval England*, ed. John Shinnars and William J. Dohar (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998); and Joseph Goering and Daniel S. Taylor, "The Summulae of Bishops Walter de Cantilupe (1240) and Peter Quinel (1287)," *Speculum* 67 (1992): 576–94.

lawe and the lore” of God across the whole of the archdiocese, is the vernacular text most closely tied to this movement at an institutional level.²

In texts like *The Lay Folks’ Catechism*, there is no question that passing on knowledge is a good and lay ignorance an evil. Even the great thirteenth-century instructional works produced for aristocratic patrons, such as Pierre Pecham d’Avergnan’s *Lumere as lais* or Robert Gretham’s *Miroir*, quietly emphasize the lay status of their readers, even as they take pains to acknowledge their learning and privilege: even, in the case of the *Miroir*, to include significant materials that are, at least potentially, critical of the clergy.³ Written as though from the archbishop, *The Lay Folks’ Catechism* has no such need for such tact and explains its program frankly, in words taken from the prologue to Lombard’s *Sentences*, as a matter, literally, of pedagogical rehumanization. The “wisdom to know God” that *The Lay Folks’ Catechism* helps its lay listeners to attain through the knowledge it inculcates, is, after all, what distinguishes “angel and man” as “skillwise creatures” from beasts. Only by regaining the rational knowledge lost at the Fall can humans also regain the capacity to become “communers of that blisse that euermore lastes.”⁴ Even the laity, unfit as they are, must therefore participate in the arduous work of the catechetical schoolroom.

Yet what can they really be expected to learn there? Anxiously aware of the gap between rote learning and clerical education, Gaytryge, whose skillful alliterative semiverse is designed, like John Bunyan’s fictions, to “stick like burrs” in the mind of the hearer, is not quite sure.⁵ The last lines of *The Lay*

2. *The Lay Folks’ Catechism*, ed. T. F. Simmons and H. E. Nolloth, Early English Text Society, o.s., 18 (London: Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1901), lines 52, 50. The most recent comprehensive study is Sue Powell, “The Transmission and Circulation of *The Lay Folks’ Catechism*,” in *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and Their Transmission: Essays in Honour of A. I. Doyle*, ed. A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994), pp. 67–84.

3. Pierre d’Abernon, *La Lumere as lais*, ed. G. Heskest, 4 vols., Anglo-Norman Text Society 54–57 (London, 1996–99); *The Middle English Mirror: Sermons from Advent to Sexagesima*, ed. T. G. Duncan and M. Connolly, Middle English Texts (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2003), which runs the Anglo-Norman and Middle English texts on facing pages. For an analysis of the Middle English version of the latter, with some discussion of its critiques of the clergy, see Ralph Hanna, *London Literature, 1300–1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 177–99.

4. *The Lay Folks’ Catechism*, lines 8–15: “He wold that som creatures of thas that he made / Were communers of that blisse that euermore lastes. / And for no creature might come to that ilk blisse / Withouten knowing of God (als that clerk techis, ubi supra), / He made skillwise creatures, angel and man, / Of witt and of wisdom to know God almyghten / And, thurg thair knowing, loue him and serue him, / And so come to that bliss that thai were made to.”

5. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, ed. Roger Sharrock (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 8: “Then read my fancies, they will stick like burrs, / And may be to the helpless, comforters.”

Folks' Catechism in particular stress the possible limitations of catechesis by way of their tortured use of the lexis of knowing: especially the verb “connen,” which Gaytryge is among the first on record to use in the sense “memorize / learn by rote,” but which he still also needs to carry the more elevated earlier implications it brings forward from Old English: study, attain, master.⁶ After offering a forty-day indulgence from the archbishop, “to gif yhou better will for to *kun*” (“learn by heart”) what it teaches,⁷ the work moves sharply back to these older senses of *kun* and its adverb, *kunandly*, in the process reestablishing the very distance between real or clerical knowledge and lay knowledge that it has ostensibly been attempting to undo:

For if ye *kunnandly* *knew* this ilk sex thinges
Thurgh thaim *sal* ye *kun* *knewe* God almighten,
Wham, als saint Iohn saies in his godspel,
Conandly for to *knewe* swilk als he is,
It is endeles life and lastand blisse.⁸

Perhaps “*kunandly* *knew*” here still means “know by memorizing”; but “*kun* *knewe*” must mean “have the capacity to know”; while the transcendent and fully reclericalized sense “know wisely/deeply” is the only possibility for “*conandly* . . . *knewe*” when it reappears attached to the eternal knowledge of God. Even as Gaytryge hopefully suggests the diversity of levels at which the abstract knowledge of his “sex thinges,” or of “God almighten,” may be known—implying with his “*sal* ye *kun* *knewe*” that rote learning at least ought to be the first rung on a ladder to true clerisy—clerical learning and the prospects of lay salvation alike beat a hasty retreat through the course of this passage, as it reveals its continued uncertainty over the suitability of any learning attainable by the ordinary laity as a route to divine knowledge and hence “lastand blisse.”

An early episode of William Langland’s *Piers Plowman*, whose A-Text may have been begun only a decade after *The Lay Folks' Catechism* was written, somewhat similarly depicts the laity as blundering beasts, incapable on their own of any sustained attempt to seek or find Truth: “Ac þere was wy non so wys þat þe wey þider couþe, / But blustrid forþ as bestis ouer

6. Hans Kurath and Sherman Kuhn, et al., *Electronic Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. “connen,” senses 1 (“To have ability, capability, skill”), 3 (“To have mastery of”), and 5 (b) (“To know by heart”). Examples given of this last use begin with Langland and Chaucer in the late fourteenth century, with a single exception, from another northern text, *Cursor Mundi* (c. 1300), lines 26566–67: “Þis es þe trouth man clepes ‘crede,’ þat ilk cristen man *cun* behous nede.”

7. *The Lay Folks' Catechism*, line 565.

8. *Ibid.*, lines 571–75.

baches and hilles,” looking for Saint Truth as though he could be discovered in the English landscape, instead of in the “herte” or the rationally illuminated mind.⁹ Speaking for Truth in much the way that Gaytryge speaks for Thoresby, Piers himself sets them right in an abstract sense, describing a path to Truth that lies through the internalization of catechesis, namely the two commandments of the New Law and the ten of the Old Law, followed by the works of penance and almsgiving.¹⁰

Yet to Langland’s imagined laity this simplified road map is a “wikkede weye.”¹¹ As a result, it is uncertainly supplemented or replaced in the second vision by another road to Truth, through doing, not knowing; then again in the third vision (fragmentary in the A-Text) by the still more uncertain affirmation, and immediate, panicked denial, that the transformation of the intellect wrought by study may after all constitute the sole adequate response to the human condition.¹² That is, of course, hardly the end of the story for Langland, whose B and C versions—taking off from the very crisis over the soteriological necessity of formal learning that somewhat abruptly ends the A version—richly extend the analysis in several directions at once. The second halves of these versions remain respectful of the figure of Clergy, but also inexorably leave the more abstract kinds of clerical knowledge behind.¹³ Yet if the poem ends with Conscience’s renewed search for the elusive Piers and the different Christian anthropology he has come to represent, no more than *The Lay Folks’ Catechism* is *Piers Plowman* able to abandon with confidence its initial premise that normative humanity is clerical while lay ignorance is a condition of lack.¹⁴

Despite their continuity with earlier pedagogical thinkers, Langland’s and Gaytryge’s sense of urgency about realizing an ideal of lay learning they understand as, practically speaking, unrealistic suggests a system under pressures at least relatively new. We can usefully compare their anxiety over how to understand illiterate knowledge, for example, with the relaxed attitude to

9. William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C and Z Versions*, 2 vols., ed. A. V. C. Schmidt, 2nd ed. (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2008–11), vol. 1, version A, cited by passus and line number, 6.513–14.

10. *Piers Plowman* A 6.48–117; Schmidt’s notes to the passage in vol. 2, pp. 546–47 identify the various injunctions, all of which belong to standard late-fourteenth-century catechesis.

11. *Piers Plowman* A 7.1.

12. For this reading of the third vision in its B-Text incarnation, see, for example, James Simpson, *Piers Plowman: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2007).

13. For the third vision in B and C, see Nicolette Zeeman, *Piers Plowman and the Medieval Discourse of Desire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For the gradual sidelining of formal knowledge, see also Nicholas Watson, “*Piers Plowman*, Pastoral Theology, and Spiritual Perfectionism: Hawky’s Cloak and Patience’s *Pater Noster*,” *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 21 (2007): 83–118, on which I am drawing more generally here.

14. See *Piers Plowman* B 20.381–87.

the issue exhibited in a text both writers will have studied, Isidore of Seville's *Sententiae*:

So far as the Church's little ones are concerned, the Creed and Lord's Prayer can suffice for the entire law in the pursuit of the kingdom of heaven. For the whole breadth of the Scriptures is enclosed in brief in this Lord's Prayer and Creed. On this matter, the prophet Isaiah says: *I have heard from the Lord God of hosts an abbreviation over all the earth. Listen, and hear my words.* This "abbreviation" is understood . . . in relation to the brevity of the Lord's Prayer or Creed, in which . . . we discern the whole breadth of the Scriptures compressed together.¹⁵

By equating the two major components of the religious education offered catechumens with the pedagogical genre of the *abbreviatio*, Isidore dismisses any concern that, for the illiterate, the Creed and Lord's Prayer may not really convey the entirety of divine law they contain. Such an attitude was viable as late as the twelfth century, when catechesis was still confined to these two items and the *Ave Maria*. Although attempts to expound the whole of Christian truth through a single text such as the *Pater Noster* continued,¹⁶ it was less viable after the spectacular expansion of catechesis to include the seven sins, virtues, works of mercy, and sacraments, and the ten and two commandments of the Old and New Law: the items laid out in Pecham's *Syllabus* of 1281 and *The Lay Folks' Catechism*.¹⁷ Not only do these new items, along with those already in place, describe in miniature a truly comprehensive pedagogical *cursus*.¹⁸ They do so, necessarily, in the form of *lists*, readily available to rote

15. "Fidei symbolum et dominica oratio pro tota lege paruulis ecclesiae ad caelorum regna sufficit capescenda. Omnis enim latitudo scripturarum in eadem oratione dominica et symboli breuitate concluditur. Vnde et propheta Esaias dicit: *Adbreuiationem audiui a Domino Deo exercituum super uniuersam terram. Adtendite et audite eloquium meum.*—Sed haec adbreuiatio aut illud intellegitur . . . propter ipsam orationem dominicam uel symboli breuitatem, in quibus . . . omnem scripturarum coarctari latitudinem." *Isidorus Hispalensis sententiae*, ed. Pierre Cazier, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 111 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), I.22, expounding Isaiah 28:22–23; my translation.

16. See, for example, *Speculum vitae*, ed. Ralph Hanna, Early English Text Society, o.s., 331, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), in which an ambitious series of expositions of catechesis are successively folded into a long verse commentary on the Lord's Prayer.

17. See Boyle, "Oculus Sacerdotis," and Goering and Taylor, "Summulae." This expansion can be traced in detail through the episcopal legislation in *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, vol. 2, *a.d. 1205–1313*, ed. F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964).

18. I hope to argue this point in more detail elsewhere; for what Pecham and others imply by their inclusion of the cardinal virtues, see, for example, István Pieter Bejczy, *The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

learning but also productive of anxiety over the gap between rote learning and understanding. We can see signs of this anxiety as evidence of the success of the new catechesis in disseminating these lists. If so, however, Gaytryge and Langland bear witness to the sense of pedagogical failure that accompanies such success.



Vernacular texts from the period between 1370 and 1420, including literary texts, are as a matter of course preoccupied with the questions raised by the new catechesis and offer two classes of response. One of these, again most familiar from the B and C versions of *Piers Plowman*, is to recategorize lay ignorance as, after all, a good thing. Langland's personification of threshold clerisy, Study, grumbles that the laity in the more gentrified parts of the poem's multifaceted world have, in their callow way, become *too* knowledgeable in matters of clerical learning, not the reverse. By and large, despite its own obvious status as a clerical product, the poem continues to glamorize the mode of knowledge of God that Piers, the poem's best expounder of catechesis, has gained through faithful service: *kynde knowing*,¹⁹ as distinct from Gaytryge's *connande knawing*, never moving too far from the claims for the privileged spiritual status of the humble implied by Piers's opening line: "I knowe hym [i.e., Truth] as kyndely as clerc doþ hise bokes."²⁰

Positively, this class of response exploits the new value placed on the categories of feeling and experience in late-medieval intellectual life by claiming that the laity, while unsuited for debates on the Trinity and the Fall, may be equipped as well as or better than the clerisy in these other areas. As Langland exhaustively chronicles, renunciation, love, and service offer routes to divinity to all. Negatively, anxiety about lay learning nudges the poem toward the arguments soon to be launched, in response to the Wycliffite challenge, by opponents of vernacular Bible translation such as William Butler and Thomas Palmer in the Oxford debate on Bible translation around 1401. Laying the intellectual foundations for Arundel's Constitutions, drafted six years later, these opponents advance what, in late fourteenth-century England, may have been a nearly new argument: that pastoral theology can be about *limiting* lay access to knowledge as well as promoting it. Since, as Aristotle notes, the ignorance of the laity is inherent in their nature, and since, as Dionysius implies, the laity should "depend utterly on the wills of Christians of higher

19. See Mary Clemente Davlin, "Kynde Knowynge as a Middle English Equivalent for Wisdom in *Piers Plowman*," *Medium Aevum* 50 (1981): 5–17.

20. *Piers Plowman* B 5.338.

order,” only such knowledge as clerics think useful (that is, the catechism) should be taught the laity. Knowledge of “God’s law” in its complex entirety should be confined to those capable of true understanding, not sacrilegiously fed, like pearls, to lay swine.²¹

Here we are suddenly in a world where theological knowledge, increasingly available in a mass of what Fiona Somerset calls “extraclergial” writing and thus no longer the precious commodity it is for Gaytryge, is, if anything, in excessive supply, but now in forms inimical to lay virtue and ecclesiological order.²² The gap between lay and cleric that Gaytryge understands as problematic, even tragic, is emphasized, indeed radicalized, while an old optimism about the value of learning constitutive of the didascalical tradition faces unexpected but politically powerful opposition.

The other class of response to the problems raised by the new catechesis, this one aligned with the Wycliffite challenge, takes Gaytryge’s high view of the necessity of divine learning but transforms his conventional representation of the ignorant laity themselves. In a wide variety of late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century vernacular texts, the laity shed their aura of incapacity to emerge, unexpectedly, as already well on their way to becoming adepts: knowledgeable, if still eager to learn, mature, and ready to fulfill the role of ethical agents, full participants in religious government, assigned to them as graduates of the new catechesis, not its dunderheaded pupils. This model of lay identity, which has some of its roots in patristic lay manuals such as Augustine’s *Enchiridion* and antecedents in French and Anglo-Norman works for the aristocratic laity, was not new.²³ But it may not have been used before to construct so ambitious a normative representation of part or all of the great social miscellany that is the laity as a whole.

21. I paraphrase portions of Butler’s and Palmer’s *determinationes*, edited by Margaret Deanesly in *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), pp. 407, 405, 421. For a fuller account of their arguments, see Anne Hudson, “The Debate on Bible Translation, Oxford 1401,” *English Historical Review* 90 (1975): 1–18; and Nicholas Watson, “Censorship and Cultural Change: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel’s Constitutions of 1409,” *Speculum* 70 (1995): 822–64, pp. 840–46; extended and in some cases qualified by Fiona Somerset, “Professionalizing Translation at the Turn of the Fifteenth Century: Ullerston’s *Determinacio*, Arundel’s *Consistutiones*,” in *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity*, ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), pp. 145–58.

22. Fiona Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

23. For its recent Anglo-Norman antecedents (and often sources), see Nicholas Watson, “Lollardy: The Anglo-Norman Heresy?” in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England, c.1100–c.1500*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Cambridge: Brewer, 2009), pp. 334–46.

Sometimes, the competent layperson of this second type of representation seems designed to advertise a text's efficacy. A trenchant example is *Dives and Pauper*, a weighty exposition of the Ten Commandments in which the friar-author and knight-reader speak as ostensible equals, but where the friar is always really in discreet control, moderating, shaping, educating, and so demonstrating the value of the dialogic mode of pastoral instruction that his text represents.²⁴

Often, however, a second factor is centrally in play: justification of the existence of the vernacular text. In the ambit of the Wycliffite Bible and the controversy that grew up around it, images of relatively educated and religiously eager laypeople were especially likely to form, not only to advertise the vast new pastoral project but also to counter representations of the laity as essentially ignorant advanced by some opponents of the translation. John Trevisa's *A Dialogue Between a Lord and a Clerk*, possibly made close in time and space to the Wycliffite Bible, is a famous case in point, although here we are not allowed to think of the Lord as needing to learn himself.²⁵ But there are others, in most of which the layperson is not Trevisa's intellectually commanding aristocrat but a humbler figure, such as the layman whose well-argued demand that his "broþer" teach him saving truths, is used to justify the series of translations of the Epistles, Acts, and Matthew that is the *Fourteenth Century English Biblical Version*:

Seþþe euerych man is y-holde by Cristis lawe of charite to louen his broþer as hym-selfe, 3e, þat han of Godes grace more knowynge þan we han þat beþ lewed & vn-kunnyng, beþ y-holde to teche us þinges þat beþ nedeful to þe hele of oure soules; þat is to seye, what þing is plesynge to God, & what displeseþ hym also. & y preye 3ow, pur charite, to techen us lewed men trewelyche þe soþe aftur oure axynge.²⁶

24. *Dives and Pauper*, ed. Priscilla Barnum, 2 vols. in 3 parts, Early English Text Society, o.s., 275, 280, 323 (London: Oxford University Press, 1976–2004).

25. See "Dialogue Between a Lord and a Clerk," in *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1530*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), excerpt 2.2 (contributed by Stephen Shepherd).

26. *A Fourteenth Century English Biblical Version*, ed. Anna C. Paues (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 4.26–33. Different versions of this sort of exchange in the texts edited by Paues and other, similar texts can feature different characters, including a religious sister and a brother. On this work, see David Lawton, "Voice After Arundel," in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2011), 133–52, pp. 136–38.

As though in reproof of reductions of the laity to passive recipients of doctrine, the “lay” voice here initiates the exchange—demanding teaching, not waiting to be given it—while the “clerical” voice retains his learned expertise but has been deprofessionalized, so that the dialogue takes place between equals under God, one more learned than the other, not between cleric and lay.

These two classes of response—to emphasize lay ignorance, arguing for the policing of lay instruction; and to emphasize lay competence, arguing for its ambitious vernacular promotion—might appear to be so opposed that there could be no easy negotiation between them: only the pitched battles represented by the Oxford translation debate, the Constitutions, and so on. Yet, as work on the vernacular politics of the period over the last twenty years has made clear, this is not the case at all. Attempts to achieve a flexible working model of the laity and the teaching they need is everywhere in the vernacular theology of the period, whether in heated arguments over their access to the scriptures or in the wide variety of explorations of the implications of doctrine found in catechetical commentaries aimed at lay readers. Rather than bifurcating into two camps under pressure from the Bible translation controversy, vernacular discussions of lay ignorance and understanding instead broadened out in all directions, generating a range of positions, many of them highly nuanced, that reflect both differences of principle and a steadily increasing awareness of the inherent social artificiality of the category of the “laity” itself.



The Twelve Tracts on Bible Translation, a carefully assembled anthology of short defenses of the vernacular Bible, are an interesting case in point here, presenting an array of different, in some cases perhaps even incompatible, discussions of the issue notable both for their articulacy and for the equal attention they pay to theological theory and observable social realities.²⁷ Although six of these mostly brief “tracts” are also found in at least one other manuscript, the collection itself, linked by a series of simple compiler colophons, is found in only a single, early fifteenth-century book, Cambridge, University Library MS I.i.6.26. Here it is found alongside surviving portions of the unique copy of a second work with an equally careful interest in the laity: *Lucidarie*, a rewriting of Honorius’s *Elucidarium*.²⁸ The editor of the

27. In *The Earliest Advocates of the English Bible: The Texts of the Medieval Debate*, ed. Mary Dove (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2010), pp. 89–142.

28. On the manuscript, see Dove, *Earliest Advocates*, p. xxxiv. For the *Lucidarie*, some seven quires of which (the bulk of the work) are missing in the manuscript, but once seem

Twelve Tracts, Mary Dove, suggests we should see the collection as a response to the Constitutions, and this may be right, although the collection could also belong to a slightly earlier moment.²⁹ The latest tract in the collection is likely the substantial Tract I, “Alle cristine people stand in þre maner of folke,” which shares material with *Dives and Pauper* (1405–10) and which might be by the same author.³⁰ Discounting the parts of Tract XI, “A comendacioun of holy writ in oure owne langage,” that draw on the opening of the mid-fourteenth-century English translation of Gretham’s *Miroir*, none appears likely to predate 1390.³¹ The tracts thus seem to belong to a twenty-year moment during which questions surrounding lay learning and capacity were undergoing intense examination, as a result of their hypercharged relationship to the Bible translation debate.

Taken as a whole, the *Twelve Tracts* fiercely combat the challenge to the view that lay religious knowledge is an inherent good. Responding to the claim that Bible reading will lead to social breakdown, Tract I insists that “ignoraunce of Goddis lawe is cause of alle meuyng and vnstabilte in þe comoun pepel, þat þei dreden neiþer God ne man as þei schulden do.”³² Responding to the claim that Bible reading will turn those who should be learners into teachers, Tract V, “Another sentens schewyng þat þe people may haue holy writ in her moder-tunge lefully,” draws on an established pastoral model of Christian community to argue that even the ignorant have a duty to pour out the “litol cuppes” of their “strete kunnyng” for the salvation of their fellows.³³ Similarly, Tract II, “Þis preueþ þat þei ben blessed þat louen Goddis lawe in þere

to have been present, see *Die mittellenglische Version des Elucidariums des Honorius Augustodunensis*, ed. Friedrich Schmitt (Burghausen: W. Trinkl, 1909). For analysis, see M. Kleinhans, “Zwischen Orthodoxie und Häresie: Die englischsprachige Rezeption des *Elucidarium*,” in *Elucidarium und Lucidaires: Zur Rezeption des Werks von Honorius Augustodunensis in der Romania und in England*, ed. Ernstpeter Ruhe, *Wissensliteratur im Mittelalter* 7 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1993), pp. 291–324. For discussion in relation to a second Middle English version, see C. W. Marx, “An Abbreviated Middle English Prose Translation of the *Elucidarius*,” *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 31 (2000): 1–53; Anna Lewis, “Rethinking the Lollardy of the *Lucidarie*: The Middle English Versions of the *Elucidarium* and Religious Thought in Late Medieval England,” *Florilegium* 27 (2010): 209–36.

29. Dove, *Earliest Advocates*, p. xxxiv, citing Tract I, 472–74 as a likely reference to Arundel’s third canon. This is certainly possible though not certain.

30. *Ibid.*, p. xxxvi.

31. Tract XI. For the probable date of the Middle English *Mirror* (before 1330), see Hanna, *London Literature*, pp. 20–24. For a sustained discussion, see Fiona Somerset, *Feeling Like Saints: Lollard Writings after Wyclif* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), chap. 6, “Moral Fantasie: Normative Allegory in Lollard Writings” (pp. 205–34).

32. Tract I, lines 446–48.

33. Tract V, lines 59–60. On the Christian duty to teach, see Vincent Gillespie, *Looking in Holy Books: Essays on Late Medieval Religious Writing in England* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), chap. 1, “*Doctrina* and *Predicacio*: The Design and Function of Some Pastoral Manuals.”

owen langage,” argues that to teach God’s law is more meritorious even than to perform those mainstays of lay piety, the works of bodily mercy, affirming that “euery cristen man or woman haþ taken staate, autorite and bonde of God in his cristondom to be a disciple of holy write”—that is, to perform the works of *spiritual* mercy, often understood as the special duty of clerics. The tract also opposes a view directly expressed in the Oxford translation debate, that “holy writt in Engliche wolde make men at debate, and sougitis to be rebel aþens here souereyns.”³⁴

For the most part these arguments oppose the topos of lay ignorance by stressing its inverse, lay capacity, aligning themselves with the optimistic view of the laity usually integral to pastoral theology and ignoring the anxieties about lay understanding expressed by Gaytryge or Langland. Participating in the broad reformist tendency to minimize differences between laity and clergy on display in the *Fourteenth Century English Biblical Version*, Tract V argues that laypeople must offer spiritual ministry to others, taking to themselves Christ’s dictum “where I am, þere also my mynyster schal be,” instead of understanding it to pertain only to “good bischopis and clerkis,” and assuming the responsibilities that go with such ministry.³⁵ Many of the tracts repeat a standard defense of the vernacular Bible, that the scriptures themselves, not some paraphrase, constitute “Goddis lawe,” sent humankind as a sealed letter that demands to be opened, read, and obeyed.³⁶ Most, especially Tract III, “Many croniculus ben fals but al þe gospel is trwe,” assumes a sufficient level of lay literacy that the superior spiritual value of Bibles to “cronyculis,” a “seyntis lijf,” and the “techynge of þe filosofris and clerkis” have to be affirmed.³⁷ Stylistically and conceptually sophisticated and taking the view that matters of religious politics are a proper subject for the laity, the collection fits the profile of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century “extraclergial” vernacular literature produced for lay consumption by scholars.³⁸

The two long tracts that open and close the collection, however, take a more complex view, qualifying the collection’s optimistic picture of lay capacity in different ways. As its incipit, “Alle cristine people stand in þre maner of folke,” suggests, Tract I recasts the ancient division of Christians into clerical and lay by subordinating it to a second, slightly less venerable model of the “three estates” in an apparent attempt to broker a compromise between

34. Tract II, lines 43–45, 48–49.

35. Tract V, lines 103–4.

36. For a recent account of the theory and practice of Wycliffite biblicism, see Somerset, *Feeling Like Saints*, chap. 5, “Lollard Parabolicism” (pp. 167–202).

37. Tract III, lines 19, 25, 32–33.

38. Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience*.

proponents and opponents of Bible translation.³⁹ Appealing to the powerful institutional interests that align the first and second estates against the much larger third, the tract argues that the benefits or perils of Bible translation need to be considered in light of a prior division of the “lewed peple” into two groups: the ignorant laity “þat kan no lettrur, as ydiotis þat neuer wenten to skole”; and the “lettrid” laity, that is, anyone of sufficient education to have attained vernacular literacy.⁴⁰ Once such a distinction is made, it becomes clear that English Bibles need to exist, but only for use by people of virtue, intelligence, and social standing. To all others, Christ’s injunction against casting “þourne margaritis aforþe swyn” cited by opponents of vernacular translation still applies.⁴¹ Such “ydiotis” “lerne to loue God and drede hym and kepe his comaundementis” by encountering him, not through the scriptures or religious images but through the book of nature, and should be taught only “comoun þingis nedful and speedful”: the items outlined in *The Lay Folks’ Catechism*, whose ready availability and use in the vernacular the work defends.⁴²

In one sense, this division of the laity into two categories is no more than a redeployment of a common distinction between the ordinary laity and their rulers that always assigned the latter spiritual responsibilities arising from their duties as administrators of the law. The relevant chapters of *Lucidarie* are missing from the Cambridge MS in its current state, but *Elucidarium* works with the same distinction, treating princes and judges as equivalent to abbots and bishops—as does Tract I, which cites Augustine’s argument that “ech man in his owne houshold schuld do þe office of a bisshop in techynge and correctynge of comoun þingis.”⁴³ Tract I’s use of this citation aligns the work with what Amy Appleford argues was a contemporary turn to the household as a locus of religious education, which demanded the creation of books and works of spiritual instruction specially produced for the lay *paterfamilias*.⁴⁴ Honorius’s “reges et iudices” thus here expand out into the tract’s long, masculine list of those whose state of education and life is such that Bible translation is needful, not harmful: “kyngus, princis, dukes, erles, barons, knyȝtus and squiers, men of lawe and oþer men of value, and comuners.”⁴⁵

39. For the tripartite division of society into *oratores*, *bellatores*, and *laboratores*, see Giles Constable, “The Orders of Society,” in *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 279–88.

40. Tract I, lines 183–88.

41. *Ibid.*, lines 211–12.

42. *Ibid.*, lines 3–8.

43. *Ibid.*, lines 34–36.

44. Amy Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380–1540* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), chap. 1.

45. See Honorius, *Elucidarium*, II.17–19, in *L’Elucidarium et les Lucidaires: Contribution*,

Yet even as Tract I echoes the low view of the “rude” laity held by opponents of Bible translation, arguing in effect that vernacular Bibles should be limited to the privileged who can afford them, the tract also shows the continuing appeal of the “laity” as an unified category. On the one hand, the work has not resolved its attitude to vernacular literacy, playing its own games with verbs of knowing, “kunnen,” “knowe,” and “vnderstande”:

Summe þer ben þat *kunnen* rede but litil or noȝt *vnderstonde*, and for hem ben ordent bookis of her moder-tonge . . . in which bokis þei mowen rede to *knowe* God and his lawe, and to fulfille it in worde and dede, and so to slee synne in himself and ech in oþer bi þer power and *kunnyng*e, wherþorouȝ þei mowe desserue eendeles blisse.⁴⁶

Although privileged lay readers need vernacular Bibles in order to “knowe God and his lawe,” this knowledge allows only a lower-level response to the divine word involving the active-life exercise of “power and kunnyng” in fulfillment of divine law “in worde and dede,” but falling short of true, clerical “vnderstond[inge].” Vernacular literacy is still the same as Latin illiteracy.

On the other hand, Tract I’s arguments for biblical learning are difficult to restrict rhetorically to the privileged, constantly invoking the principle of *universality of access*, that seductive bridge between the categories *lay* and *vernacular*. However hard it tries to keep its two laities separate, it tends to undercut its own attempts at social nuance whenever it returns to its key claim, that the scriptures are divine law that must be announced to all in order to be promulgated:

ȝif þe kyng of Englonde sente to cuntrees and citees his patente on Latyn or Frensche to do crie his lawis, his statutes and his wille to þe peple, and it were cried oonly on Latyn or Frensche and not on Englisch, it were no worschip to þe kyng ne warnyng to þe peple, but a greet desseyt. Ryȝt so þe kyng of heuene wolde þat his lawe and his welle were cried and tauȝt openly to þe pepel, and but it were tauȝt hem opunly on Englishe, þat þei mowen knowen it, ellis it is aȝens þe worschip of God and gret hendryng.⁴⁷

This powerful analogy is strained enough that it may not inevitably resolve into an argument for vernacular Bibles, which, even in epitome, cannot realis-

par l’histoire d’un texte, à l’histoire des croyances religieuses en France au moyen âge, ed. Yves Lefèvre (Paris: E. De Boccard, 1954), p. 412; see Tract I, lines 186–87.

46. Tract I, lines 9–16.

47. Ibid., lines 117–24.

tically be “cried” in every village square, as the king’s laws are supposed to be; indeed, *The Lay Folks’ Catechism*, designed as a summary of divine law, would fit the analogy more closely than can the Wycliffite Bible. But the analogy suggests that Tract I cannot quite get behind the very nuance or, perhaps one should rather say, compromise—vernacular Bibles, restricted to the few—that it seems to want to broker.

Revisiting the problems raised by Tract I, Tract XII, “A dialoge as hit were of a wyse man and of a fole denyinge þe trweþe wiþ fablis,” returns to the issue of universality of access in a different way, by staging a new confrontation between lay types, now distinguished along spiritual, not social, lines. The “fole” who meets with the “wyse man” at the outset of the tract, opposing the severe scripturalism of the latter’s call to a life of penitence with a defense of gossip, swearing, tale-telling, and other back-slapping oral genres in sustaining a customary religion, might well be a lay *paterfamilias*, one of the class defined by Tract I as “men of value.” But he is also a representative of “þe people,” the worldly lay masses, here depicted in negative terms, not the idealizing ones of most of the literature in support of vernacular Bibles, as delighting in the sins of the tongue: “liynge, flatreyng, bachitynge, slaundrynge, swerynge, cursynge and wordis of rebawdie.”⁴⁸ For the Wise Man, these are the specific sins that divide true religion, here seen as practiced only by isolated individuals, from its collective simulacrum, the religion of “þe people”:

For late a man come nowadays amonge þe people, be þei olde or 3onge, he schal riȝt soone heere talis of pride, glotony and lecherie and of alle manere synnes, and he þat can most merely schewe þese wordis to þe vnwese people is gretly comendid of hem for þis foli dede, and þei sweren armes, bones, hert and sidis þat he is a good felawe, and þat eche companye is þe betere þat he is amonge.⁴⁹

Opposing the verbal texture of the worldly lay culture it depicts to the “medic-inable wordis of God,” found in vernacular religious instruction, Tract XII again has a certain sympathy for the opponents of Bible translation in their anxiety to protect divine mysteries from desecration, even as it seeks to show the urgency of providing sound scriptural teaching in English.

Rather than making any explicit case for the Wycliffite Bible, then, Tract XII sets out to delimit a wider field of religious instruction capable of opposing the rampant secularization of discourse, via the idle “tales” of the ignorant, that it sees as the dominant force in contemporary vernacular culture.

48. Tract XII, lines 17–18.

49. Ibid., lines 4–9.

To an extent, this process follows familiar pathways. When the Wise Man's somber discourse is interrupted for the second time by the Fool requiring "a mery tale of Giy of Wariwyk, Beufi3 of Hamton, eiper of Sire Lebew3, Robyn Hod, eiper of summe welfarynge man of here condiciouns and maners," we are meant to be put in mind of the earlier English and Anglo-Norman religious works that pour scorn on secular romances, even those with homiletic content.⁵⁰ *Speculum vitae* states its intent "To carp of mast nedefull thyng," not the "dedes of armes" and "amours" of "Beuis of Hamptoun" and "Sir Gye of Warwyke." Gretham's *Miroir* warns the reader (in the English version) against the "lesinges" found in "tristrem, oper of Gii of Warwike, oper of ani oper," which "ne be nou3t drawn out of holi writ." "The wyse mon wol of wisdom here / The fool him drawes to foly nere," declares *Cursor Mundi*, listing a series of similar foolish works.⁵¹ Besides defending the Wycliffite Bible itself, then, Tract XII keeps room open for an older and still serviceable tradition of verse biblical narration and instruction.

Similarly, when the Fool is improbably converted at the end of the work, the Wise Man's advice on how he must emend his life stays within the domain of vernacular catechesis, with a few advanced variations. Like the Three Kings, who offered Christ gold, incense, myrrh, the Fool must offer the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, then return home by another way, again like the kings (Matt. 2:12), rightly using the five senses and seven gifts of the Spirit in forsaking the road of the sins for that of the commandments, the cardinal virtues, and the works of mercy, bodily and ghostly, so as to be rewarded "with the eighte blessinges of Criste rehersed in the gospel."⁵² The converted Fool can find these items in scripture, but might be best advised to pursue them in the many contemporary catechetical expositions designed to help him.

Certain of the Fool's responses, however, seem designed to open a space for a less expected kind of vernacular writing: the mode of satirical narrative,

50. Ibid., lines 162–64; see Watson, "Lollardy: the Anglo-Norman Heresy?"

51. *Speculum vitae*, lines 35–51; *The Mirror*, 3.15–18 (the French lists different secular stories: "Veez si pot estre uair / Que vns enfest oust poair / Cum dist la chancun de Mainet, / V del orfanin Sansunnet, / V de la geste dan Tristram, / V del bon messenger Balam. / Veez les altres ensement: / N'i ad celui ki trop n'i ment; / Ne sunt pas forstrait d'escripture / Main chascun fai sa controuure": p. 2, lines 27–36); *Cursor Mundi*, lines 21–22, in *The Idea of the Vernacular*, excerpt 3.14.

52. Tract XII, lines 383–433. This expanded catechetical list could have any number of sources or none, but most of these items are found in the English derivatives of the late thirteenth-century *Somme le roi* by Laurent d'Orléans, such as *The Book of Vices and Virtues: A Fourteenth Century Translation of the "Somme le Roi" of Lorens d'Orléans*, ed. W. Nelson Francis, Early English Text Society, o.s., 217 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942) or *Speculum vitae*.

loosely descended from the *sermo ad status* tradition, whose best-known contemporary vernacular representatives are *Piers Plowman* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, to both of which Tract XII may indeed allude.⁵³ The Wise Man's account of how the "people" welcome "merely" told "talis of pride, glotony and lecherie" and commend the teller blasphemously by "armes, bones, hert and sidis" as a "good felawe" already seems evocative of Chaucer's poem. *The Canterbury Tales* is greatly preoccupied with the asymmetrical relationship of tale-telling and moral truth, and the poem's blasphemers, most especially the Miller, the Pardoner, and the Host himself, use similar language, in the Host's case as a kind of personal signature.⁵⁴ The poem also conducts its own, characteristically quizzical investigation of the moral as well as social value systems implied by the phrase "good felawe."⁵⁵ "Myrie" and its adverb, which Tract XII uses four times in connection to tale-telling, is a further *Canterbury Tales* keyword, found especially in the tales of the Miller, the Merchant, and the Nun's Priest, often in association with sex or singing and used in several tale transitions to refer to tales and their tellers themselves.⁵⁶ Initially used as a generic adjective for the company of pilgrims and their tale-telling game, and given some dignity by its association with the Knight as he begins his tale, its status soon deteriorates toward the ribald and never recovers.⁵⁷ Even the

53. For the *sermo ad status* and its influence on Chaucer and other literary writers, see Claire Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures: Preaching, Performance, and Gender in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), chap. 7, "Sermones ad Status and Old Wives' Tales; or, The Audience Talks Back" (pp. 143–67).

54. Quotations of the *Canterbury Tales* are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), with subsequent references by fragment and line number: I.3125 (Miller: "by armes, and by blood and bones"), VI.651 (Pardoner: "By goddes precious herte, and by his nayles"), II.1166, VI.314, IX.9 (Host: "for goddes bones," "By corpus bones," "for cokkes bones"). For the significance of the figure of the blaspheming Host to the theological project of *The Canterbury Tales*, see Nicholas Watson, "Chaucer's Public Christianity," *Religion and Literature* 37 (2005): 99–114, pp. 105–6.

55. For "bette felawe" and "good felawe," see I.395 (General Prologue: the Shipman); I.648, 650, 653 (General Prologue: about the Summoner); III.617–18 (the Wife of Bath); III.1385 (the Friar's Tale: about the Summoner).

56. "Myrie" and variants appear more than sixty times in *The Canterbury Tales*. For the word in connection to tale-telling, see I.782 (the Host to the company: "But ye be myrie, I wol yeve yow myn heed!"), IV.10 (the Host to the Clerk: "Telle us som myrie tale, by youre fey!"), VI.316–17 (the Host turning to the Pardoner: "Or but I heere anon a myrie tale, / Myn herte is lost for pitee of this mayde"), VII.1924 (the Host to the Monk: "My lord, the monk, quod he, by myrie of cheere"), VII.3449 (the Host to the Nun's Priest: "This was a murie tale of Chauntecleer"), VIII.597–98 (the Host to the Canon's Yeoman: "Can he oght telle a myrie tale or tweye, / With which he glade may his compaignye?"). The word's association with story or song was ancient.

57. At the end of the General Prologue, the Knight "bigan with right a myrie cheere / His tale anon, and seyde as ye may heere," dignifying the word (I.857–58). The rot sets in with

Parson's final invocation of the word in the phrase "myrie tale in prose" may not quite redeem it, given the reproof that his tale metes out to the linguistic turpitude of the rest of the poem: "ne swereth nat so synfully in dismembrynge of Crist by soule, herte, bones, and body."⁵⁸ Tract XII actually approves of *The Canterbury Tales*, if read earnestly, from the viewpoint of the Parson.

Several moments in the Fool's speeches, moreover, suggest the more precise possibility that Tract XII is appealing directly to Chaucer and perhaps Langland to fill out its satirical account of a nominally Christian lay society, conformed so fully to the practice of everyday life as to be afflicted with the deadly sloth that the B-Text of *Piers Plowman* associates with the "rymes of Robyn Hood and Randolf Erl of Chestre" from which Sloth cannot tear himself to meet the simplest demands of his faith.⁵⁹ Mary Dove identifies a possible allusion to the portrait of the Summoner in the General Prologue: "þouȝ a man speke wordis of harlotrye . . . vsynge leccherie and oþer gret synnes, herfore he schal not be punysched but bi þe purse," which she suggests evokes the Summoner's soft treatment of the lecherous "good felawe" mentioned in the General Prologue, who escapes with a fine from the archdeacon's court, "For in his purs he sholde ypunysshed be."⁶⁰ A second allusion, to a famous couplet of the Pardoner's Prologue ("I rekke nevere, whan that they been beryed / Though that hir soules goon a-blakeberied!")—found in a passage which could also conceivably reference an equally famous line of *Piers Plowman* ("Do wel and haue wel, and God shal haue þi soule")—she views as definite.⁶¹

3e, 3e, man, whanne þout haste al seid þer is namore but "do wel and haue wel," and as good a soule haþ an owle as a cockow, and I trow as longe as þou has lyued þou sawist neuer soule goo a-blacberied; þerfore, be my rede lat us be merye and sele carre.⁶²

Dove seems to me likely to be right. It is, of course, always possible that Chaucer and the author of Tract XII were drawing on a common set of proverbial

Nicholas, Absolom, and Alison in the Miller's Tale: "Ful often blessed was his myrie throte," "A myrie child he was, so God me save," "To looke on hire hym thoughte a myrie lyf?" (I.3218, I.3325, I.3344). The downward slide is then confirmed by the Reeve and the Wife of Bath: "So myrie a fit ne hadde she nat ful yore," "The firste nyght had many a myrie fit" (I.4230, III.42), and so forth.

58. *Canterbury Tales* X.46, X.28, X.592.

59. *Piers Plowman* B 5.396.

60. Tract XII, lines 88–89; compare *Canterbury Tales* I.653–56.

61. *Canterbury Tales* VI.405–46; *Piers Plowman* A 8.98.

62. Tract XII, lines 284–87.

stock phrases, but if so, they are not attested elsewhere, and the resemblance here, to say the least, is striking.⁶³

As the Wise Man's earnest responses to them show, the Fool's use of these phrases to support a complacently optimistic salvation theology is not quite in tune with their functions for Chaucer and Langland. This is also true of the reference to Canterbury pilgrimage in his longest speech, one again redolent of the world of Chaucer's lowlives and Langland's second vision.

3e, 3e, thou seist. I hadde as leif nouȝt as suche talis. Late us lyue as oure
faders deden, and þanne good inouȝ, for þei weren wel iloued of cheters,
wrestlers, bokeler-pleieris, of daunceris and singeris, and they were wel-
welled to haue hem to the ale. 3e, and ofte tymes on þe Sundays for good
felowschip þei wolden dyne and drynke be note and go to chirch after,
and so late us do nowadays and we schullen have the blissyng of seynt
Thomas of Caunturbere. 3he, man, and ȝif thou haue wel idrunke att home
þi stomak schal waxe warme, þouȝ it be coolde weeder, and þe soote sau-
oure of good ale schal stiȝe into þi brayne and brynge þe mery asleepe. 3he,
and þouȝ the prest preche þanne never so faste, it schal no more greue þi
wittis þan þe soun of a myre harpe.⁶⁴

In as much as they yet again support the Fool's theology of cheap grace, the "cheters, wrestlers, bokeler-pleieris . . . daunceris and singeris" are different from the Pardoner's "tombesteres / . . . yonge frutesteres, / Syngeres with harpes, baudes, wafereres," who contribute to the tale's portrait of a riotous "felaweshipe" whose members' murderous actions shut them out from any possibility of redemption.⁶⁵ Yet spiritual complacency is as much a theme for Chaucer or Langland as it is in Tract XII, and it is not hard to read both poets as the tract would have us read them, as conducting satirical analyses of the predicament of the laity, abandoned by the pastoral teaching of a compromised church in whose secularization it has eagerly participated.

Satire thus appears to be another vernacular genre that Tract XII seeks to protect, for the work it does in alerting and converting readers through its forceful, shaming, entertaining accounts of social sin. If we take the work as alluding directly to Chaucer and Langland, as I incline to do, the effect is

63. See Bartlett Jere Whiting, with the collaboration of Helen Wescott Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly before 1500* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), where Chaucer provides the only example of "To go Blackberrying" (B334); under "Do well and have well" (D278), Whiting lists several, mostly fifteenth-century examples, but only Langland has the precise phrasing of Tract XII.

64. Tract XII, lines 187–96.

65. *Canterbury Tales* VI.479.

not only to place the Wycliffite Bible as one among several useful vernacular genres: part of a larger picture, not the singular object it is in many controversial writings on Bible translation. It is also to see Tract XII as attempting a specifically literary canonization of the Wycliffite Bible as a vernacular moral masterwork whose only peers are the greatest religious satires of the period. Building on Tract I's attempts to reach compromise across ideological lines, Tract XII hopes to create a community of the earnest who can agree on the principle of vernacular instruction, even if they may not find wholly persuasive the claims made for vernacular biblicism itself.

When it takes the form of folly, lay ignorance might indeed be enough to give readers of Tract XII pause before throwing the divine pearls of biblical wisdom out into the world. But the need for instruction remains compelling, and oral delivery mechanisms such as *The Lay Folks' Catechism* are inadequate to the situation. During the fifteenth century, the Wycliffite Bible did indeed circulate, usually not in its full form, as a prestige item among a wide array of vernacular religious writings, prose and verse, of all levels of complexity, generally immune to censorship except when found among communities lower down the social ladder and already suspect on other grounds. The *Twelve Tracts* points energetically to the work's mixed future beyond the polarities of the translation debate. In so doing, it also points to the mixed future of the topos of lay ignorance, increasingly likely now to be challenged by images of lay competence, but still a widely available rhetorical resource into and through the sixteenth-century Reformation.

York Merchants at Prayer

The Confessional Formula of the Bolton Hours

ROBYN MALO

York, Minster MS Add. 2, a mercantile book of hours compiled in or around York sometime between 1407 and 1420 and commonly known as the Bolton Hours, includes the standard fare of later medieval books of hours: Marian and Christocentric devotions and prayers, hours of the Cross, a calendar showing saints' and feast days, penitential psalms and formulas, the litany of the saints, and the office of the dead.¹ But although primers (as these books of hours are also called) include reasonably predictable prayers and devotions, they can reflect local interests, too: in terms of sheer numbers, books of hours are among the most popular forms of medieval devotional literature; in terms of their composition, they are also among the most idiosyncratic.² The Bolton Hours is no exception:

1. A small, highly decorative manuscript, the Bolton Hours is approximately three by four inches and bound together unevenly in irregular gatherings ranging from four to ten leaves. For a full description, see Neil R. Ker and Alan J. Piper, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, vol. 4, *Paisley-York* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 786–91. On the dating of this manuscript, see Sarah Rees Jones and Felicity Riddy, “The Bolton Hours of York: Female Domestic Piety and the Public Sphere,” in *Household, Women, and Christianities in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Anneke Mulde Bakker and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 215–60, pp. 223–25; see also Patricia Cullum and Jeremy Goldberg, “How Margaret Blackburn Taught Her Daughters: Reading Devotional Instruction in a Book of Hours,” in *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain*, ed. Arlyn Diamond, Ann Hutchison, Rosalynn Voaden, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 217–36, pp. 217–19.

2. On the central place of books of hours—over 1,400 of which survive in extant codices—in late medieval devotional reading, see Mary C. Erler, “Devotional Literature,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 3, 1400–1557, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp

fol. 100v includes a three-quarter-page illumination of St. Richard Scrope, erstwhile bishop, executed traitor under Henry IV, and popularly venerated (though not canonized) saint of fifteenth-century York.³ His inclusion in this primer, as many have noted, serves as a testimony to the manuscript's urban York provenance.⁴ Along with two images of Scrope, illuminations of William of York and celebrations of other northern saints would have reminded the fifteenth-century reader of his or her relationship both to the community in York and to heaven (populated, as it happens, by saints associated with the reader's hometown and with the North in general).⁵

This essay will focus not on the Bolton Hours *per se* but on the confessional formula that is crammed into the opening and closing leaves of the manuscript. In many ways conventional in its recollection of the seven deadly sins and catalog of the Ten Commandments, this formula does not read like a general invitation to confession, as confessional formulas are supposed to do. Instead, the formula is, if not personal, particular to the social and economic milieu of a family like the Boltons. Some moments are charming in their presentation of sin: writes the author of this formula, "I haue synnyd in glotony ofte tymes & many, many tymes etty[n] & drownkyn mor than my body may resonably [be] sustenyd with" (fol. 1v; emphasis added).⁶ It is easy to imagine the repetition of "many" as distinctive, the author recalling and even daydreaming about a particular dish. And indeed, this author—whom I will argue was likely a member of the Bolton family—shapes the confessional

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 495–525. See also Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers, 1240–1570* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), esp. pp. 3–52.

3. There is another illumination of Scrope on fol. 202v. On Scrope's cult, see J. W. McKenna, "Popular Canonization as Political Propaganda: The Cult of Archbishop Scrope," *Speculum* 45 (1970): 608–23; on Scrope and the Bolton Hours in particular, see John Osborne, "Politics and Popular Piety in Fifteenth-Century Yorkshire: Images of 'St' Richard Scrope in the Bolton Hours," *Florilegium* 17 (2000): 1–19. On the censorship of Scrope's shrine, see Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 238–46.

4. On the provenance of this manuscript, see Cullum and Goldberg, "How Margaret Blackburn Taught Her Daughters," pp. 219–21; Rees Jones and Riddy, "Bolton Hours of York," pp. 243–45, identify specific features of this manuscript they associate with Mickelgate in York; so, too, the five wounds of Christ on fol. 175v similarly suggest production in York: see Clifford Davidson, "Suffering and the York Plays," *Philological Quarterly* 81 (2002): 1–31, pp. 17–18.

5. Depictions of northern saints include St. John of Bridlington (fol. 207r), St. Cuthbert (fol. 40r), and St. Sitha (fol. 40v).

6. This moment is less clearly idiosyncratic than other instances in the confessional formula; as Richard Newhauser pointed out to me in private correspondence, it is entirely possible that the author is representing a perfectly standard version of gluttony, the very definition of which is consuming far too much. In concert with other particularities of this formula, however, the temptation to understand it as reflecting the author's own habits remains.

formula to reflect the concerns of a family like the York Boltons. Some omissions or alterations in the section on the Ten Commandments, for instance, might seem at first glance like mistakes born of ignorance; but as I will show in this essay, the author in fact provides a unique perspective on how a successful lay family might square the demands of religion with the ordinary concerns of successful businesspeople.

The Bolton Hours is named for a mid fifteenth-century mercantile family in York, Alice and John Bolton III, who seem to have owned it at least in 1445 when John died.⁷ Patricia Cullum and Jeremy Goldberg have convincingly shown that Alice Bolton's mother, Margaret Blackburn, commissioned the manuscript for herself and her daughters.⁸ It is no surprise, then, that this book of hours foregrounds the popular devotional figures of the North and of York. Mid and late fifteenth-century additions to the manuscript, such as the confessional formula and the obituaries interpolated into the calendar, illustrate a still more specific connection to York's governing class: the mercantile oligarchy, of which the Boltons and Blackburns were a part.⁹ Both Alice Bolton's father and her brother, Nicholas Blackburn Sr. and Jr., served as mayor of York (in 1412 and 1429, respectively). Nicholas Sr. and Margaret belonged to the prestigious Trinity guild, long associated with mercers and merchants; they endowed a Trinity window at All Saints, North Street and were buried in York Minster.¹⁰ For their part, in 1430 the Boltons joined the elite Corpus

7. There is an interpolated obit for John Bolton on fol. 30v. There are competing claims as to how and when Alice Bolton came to own the Bolton Hours, and the circumstances under which the book passed to her remain unclear. See Cullum and Goldberg, "How Margaret Blackburn Taught Her Daughters," p. 225.

8. Ibid.

9. Jeremy Goldberg tracks the growing authority of the civic government in York, made up largely of successful merchants like John Bolton and Nicholas Blackburn, over craft guilds, suggesting that the government in the city was manipulated in order "to ensure that mercantile interests were upheld." See Goldberg, "Craft Guilds, the Corpus Christi Play and Civic Government," in *The Government of Medieval York: Essays in Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter*, ed. Sarah Rees Jones (York: Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, 1997), 151–63, p. 159. As Jenny Kermode points out, the governing elite of York was overwhelmingly mercantile: between 1300 and 1509, 122 men served as mayor; 79 percent (96) were merchants. See her *Medieval Merchants: York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 39; and on the mercantile success of the Boltons and Blackburns in particular, see pp. 188–89, 298–301.

10. Cullum and Goldberg, "How Margaret Blackburn Taught Her Daughters," p. 222. On the Guild of the Holy Trinity, see *The York Mercers and Merchant Adventurers*, Surtees Society 129 (Durham: Andrews & Co., Sadler Street, 1918), pp. v–xiii. Margaret Blackburn's financial stability after her husband's death in 1432 is similarly suggestive of the Blackburns' overall prestige in the city: she retained sufficient wealth after Nicholas died to make bequests totaling over £520 when she died in 1435. Bequests of other mercantile widows who were financially independent at the time of their death were significantly lower, £137 being the next highest sum. See Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 42, 94–96.

Christi guild;¹¹ John Bolton served as mayor of York and as an MP,¹² and his father was a prominent supporter and friend of John Gysburn, mayor of York three times in the 1370s. This relationship in particular connects the Boltons to one of York's most controversial political figures: Gysburn was a wealthy merchant whose mayoralty was so plagued by scandal that he was removed from office in November 1380.¹³ Gysburn was also one of the affluent merchants who controlled the route of the Corpus Christi cycle.¹⁴ What is more, Margaret Bolton, Alice and John's daughter, married into the landed gentry.¹⁵ Thomas Scauceby, whose interpolated obituary also appears in the Bolton Hours' calendar, was yet another successful merchant in fifteenth-century York: a member of the Corpus Christi guild as of 1439 and closely connected to the Blakburn family,¹⁶ he was city chamberlain in 1442–43, master of the Mercers' guild in 1443, and mayor in 1462–63;¹⁷ his name also appears in a 1454 list of stationholders on the route of the Corpus Christi plays.¹⁸

In confirming the Bolton Hours' connection to two of the most influential families in fifteenth-century York, as well as their connections to other prominent figures like Scauceby, the interpolated, fifteenth-century obituaries shed light on what might otherwise seem to be infelicities in the primer's confessional formula.¹⁹ This formula was very likely composed by a member

11. On the prestige of the Corpus Christi Guild and its role in York, see Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 18; on the guild as well as the Boltons' place in it, see David J. F. Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity, and Power: Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389–1547* (York: York Medieval, 2000), pp. 98, 162, 166–67; see also Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 46–55.

12. See Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 81; Cullum and Goldberg, "How Margaret Blackburn Taught Her Daughters," p. 221.

13. Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 57. See also Beckwith, *Signifying God*, p. 38.

14. On Gysburn's role as stationholder in the Corpus Christi cycle, particularly between 1399 and 1417, see Crouch, "Paying to See the Play: The Stationholders on the Route of the York Corpus Christi Play in the Fifteenth Century," *Medieval English Theatre* 13 (1991): 64–111, pp. 64–65, 71. On conflict between stationholders and members of craft guilds, see Beckwith, *Signifying God*, pp. 32–37.

15. Margaret married first Sir Roger Salvayn and then Henry Gascoigne, Esq. See Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 83; and Pamela King, "Corpus Christi Plays and the 'Bolton hours' 1: Tastes in Lay Piety and Patronage," *Medieval English Theatre* 18 (1996): 46–62, p. 51.

16. Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity, and Power*, p. 166.

17. Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Dorrell, "The York Mercers and Their Pageant of Doomsday, 1433–1526," *Leeds Studies in English* 6 (1972): 10–35, pp. 11–12.

18. Crouch, "Paying to See the Play," 75–76; and see Cullum and Goldberg, "How Margaret Blackburn Taught Her Daughters," p. 221.

19. See Alexandra Barratt, "'Enveloped In Synne': The Bolton Hours and Its Confessional Formula," in *Interstices: Studies in Late Middle English and Anglo-Latin Texts in Honour of A. G. Rigg*, ed. Richard Firth Green and Linne R. Mooney (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 3–14. On the dialect of this formula as northern, see *ibid.*, p. 4, and Rees Jones and Riddy, "Bolton Hours of York," p. 222.

of the Bolton or Blackburn family: paleographical and codicological evidence confirm that the Bolton Hours was finished before the formula was inscribed, as the formula ends abruptly on fol. 4r in the middle of a section on the sacraments and then picks up again on fol. 209r, after a full-page illumination of the Day of Judgment. So, too, while the primer itself is inscribed in *textura*, probably by a York Dominican,²⁰ the confessional formula and obits are recorded in a mixed hand of *anglicana* and *secretary* and in different ink from the rest of the primer. Based on the appearance of these hands, I believe the order of composition of these additions to be, first, the confessional formula; then the obit for John Bolton as well as two interpolations in the formula; and finally, the three remaining obituaries. Three and possibly four scribes are responsible for these additions: the confessional formula, to be found on fols. 1–4 and 209–10, is in a single and distinctive hand;²¹ another scribe recorded the obituary for John Bolton and may also have added two words to the confessional formula itself;²² and another still recorded the obituaries for Alice Bolton, Thomas Scauceby, and Agnes Lond, all of whom are listed as having died in 1472.²³

Given that the book was in their possession at the time of these additions, it is highly probable that members of the Blackburn or Bolton household are responsible for all of them. Perhaps Alice Bolton, who lived almost thirty years longer than her husband, documented (or had a family clerk inscribe) the date of her husband's death in 1445; perhaps she or some other woman

20. Cullum and Goldberg, "Bolton Hours of York," pp. 219–20. The dialect of a verse prayer on fols. 206r–207r, in the same hand as the primer's original scribe, is distinctly northern (Carleton F. Brown and Rossell Hope Robbins, *The Index of Middle English Verse* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1943], p. 1734), confirming Cullum and Goldberg's suggestion that this scribe resided in York at the time of its composition; cf. Carleton Brown, ed., *Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1939), pp. 181–83.

21. The formations of the "s," "h," and "b" in particular distinguish the scribe of the formula from the two obituary scribes (fols. 30v–32r).

22. It is difficult to distinguish between the scribe who noted John Bolton's death in 1445 and whoever added gender-inclusive language to the confessional formula. On the one hand, the different formation of the "h" in the interpolated "husbond" (fol. 3v), the "h" of the confessional formula's original scribe (fol. 3v), and the "h" of "Johannis" in the obit (fol. 30v) suggests three separate scribes. On the other hand, the "h" of "husbond" looks especially bizarre, including a hook that the scribe of the confessional formula executes neatly; and the "b" of "husbond" matches that of "obitus" (fol. 30v); it is possible that whoever wrote "husbond" also inscribed the obit for John Bolton and was attempting to mimic the hand of the formula's scribe on fol. 3v.

23. These obits, to be found on fols. 31r–32r, are recorded in brown ink; the formation of the "c" and the "b" in particular distinguishes this hand from the other additions to the book of hours, including the obituary for John Bolton. Based on the ink color, this scribe is likely also responsible for another addendum to the calendar on fol. 28v to include the feast day of Saint Sitha. Whoever is responsible for this interpolation slavishly tried to imitate the *textura* of the book's original scribe.

who used (or composed) the confessional formula added one instance of gender-inclusive language to be found there: “Also þat I haue desyryd þe wife [‘husbond’] of my neghtbur” (fols. 3v–4r).²⁴ Perhaps Margaret Blakburn, Alice Bolton’s mother, commissioned or composed the formula itself upon receiving the finished book of hours. Moreover, as I will argue in this essay, while the author of this formula was clearly aware of the basic components of confessional forms, he or she wrote from the perspective of a wealthy merchant, highlighting issues that would likely have been of concern to the mercantile oligarchy, excising those that would not, and making allowances for worldly behavior that clerics routinely condemn. The formula clearly expresses lay and mercantile interests in even more intimate and specific ways than the book of hours proper. This document, in other words, reflects the local preoccupations of the manuscript and illustrates the effect of oral, public, and local culture on mainstream religious practices.²⁵

The Confessional Formula of the Bolton Hours: Mercantile Piety at Work

Forms of confession such as we find in the Bolton Hours are quite distinct from the *summae confessorum* and other didactic confessional works.²⁶ In his analysis of over 440 Latin, French, and English forms of confession from circa 1200 to circa 1500, Michael Cornett explains that the form of confession frequently includes staples such as the Seven Deadly Sins, the Ten Commandments, the Articles of Faith, the Sacraments, and the Seven Works of

24. There is one other example in the formula, also on fol. 3v: “Also þat I haue synnyd flesly *with* any [‘man’] woman outhur weddyd or unweddyd.” In this instance, however, the word “man” is patently the hand of the formula’s original scribe.

25. King has also suggested that this confessional formula shows evidence of “lay mercantile use,” though she does not examine the formula in detail. See “Corpus Christi Plays,” p. 56.

26. For what is still the most comprehensive overview of medieval confessional practice, see Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977); and Tentler’s earlier essay, “The Summa for Confessors as an Instrument of Social Control,” in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, ed. Charles Trinkaus and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 103–25, especially pp. 109–17. Leonard E. Boyle’s response, “The Summa for Confessors as a Genre, and Its Religious Intent,” is in the same volume, pp. 126–30. But see also the collection *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages*, ed. Peter Biller and Alastair Minnis (York: York Medieval, 1998), particularly Biller’s helpful introduction, “Confession in the Middle Ages,” pp. 1–34; and, more recently, Richard Newhauser, “Introduction: Cultural Construction and the Vices,” in *The Seven Deadly Sins: From Communities to Individuals*, ed. Richard Newhauser (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 1–18, and Abigail Firey, ed., *A New History of Penance* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

Mercy.²⁷ Catechetical material is similar, of course; what makes the confessional form unique, as Cornett points out, is its focus on preparing for confession “through a first-person speaker”: “*Not* the confession of any particular sinner, the form of confession presents a full range of possibilities of sin for anyone, or at least has this comprehensive purpose.”²⁸ I think we might both expand and complicate Cornett’s definition by considering how formulas were also modified to suit the needs of particular communities, and not just the singular (and universal) penitent. In making this suggestion, I also part ways with Alexandra Barratt, whose observation that the formula may be “a broad-spectrum, all-purpose formula,” “strik[ing] one with its inclusiveness,” has much in common with Cornett’s interpretation of these documents.²⁹ While it is true that the Bolton Hours’ formula sometimes behaves in the generalized way we might expect of this genre, offering gender-inclusive moments and incorporating the sacrament of ordination as well as marriage, moments of revision and omission reveal concerns in keeping with such a high-status family. This confessional formula may not have been composed for a particular individual, then, but its author nevertheless wrote it with a particular community of elite merchants in mind: two of the most successful families in York at the turn of the fifteenth century.

And indeed, the formula reflects the status of these families; it does not necessarily, as Cornett suggests, “present a full range of possibilities of sin *for anyone*.”³⁰ In fact, this formula makes allowances that, in the context of medieval penance, seem rather odd: the author of the formula implies, for instance, that it is possible to have just the right amount of pride:

I haue synd [in] þe seuen dedely syns, þat is to say [in pryde?] of herte,
of vnbowsumnes to god and haly kyrke & agayn the hele of my saule, in
prowde spekyng, in continaunce of beryng, and in araiment of clethyng,
in werldys gude hafeyng, owthyr of grace or of kyndredyn. Als so [. . .] in

27. Michael Cornett, “The Form of Confession: A Later Medieval Genre for Examining Conscience” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011), p. 26. For a description of the typical contents of forms of confession, see also Robert R. Raymo, “Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction,” in vol. 7 of *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500*, ed. Albert E. Hartung and J. Burke Severs (New Haven, CT: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1986), pp. 2358–59; Philip Durkin, “Examining One’s Conscience: A Survey of Late Middle English Prose Forms of Confession,” *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 28 (1997): 19–56; and for a list of many of the forms of confession that Cornett examines, see P. S. Jolliffe, *A Check-List of Middle English Prose Writings of Spiritual Guidance* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), pp. 67–74.

28. Cornett, “Form of Confession,” p. 5; emphasis in original.

29. Barratt, “Envoluped In Synne,” p. 6.

30. Cornett, “Form of Confession,” p. 5; emphasis added.

any [conceyuyng] of gude name, & in spyce of ypocrysie, to haue commendacioun be any [symulacion] of þe pepill better þan I ‘was’ worthy [to] haue. (fol. 1r)³¹

This section in some ways corresponds to traditional subdivisions of pride: disobedience (vnbowsumnes), vanity (perhaps including boasting, here—prowde spekyng), and hypocrisy. So, too, in expressing regret for having sought “commendacioun [. . .] of þe pepill better þan I was worthy [to] haue” (more praise of the people, by any pretense, than I was worthy of), the author draws on another branch of pride: ambition. At the same time, the author limits the circumstances of his or her repentance: of disobedience to God and the church, rather than, more broadly speaking, “hem þat þu schuldest obiezschen”;³² of conceiving of his or her “gude name” specifically beyond its worth, rather than simply repenting of pride in status.³³ Put another way, the author, while rejecting dissembling behavior (by any symulacioun), implies that he or she is in fact “worthy” of at least some commendation and, even as the author repents of this behavior, obliquely condemns others who pretend to be of a higher class. Read in light of the Boltons’ and Blakburns’ status in York, these moments signal both an awareness of their local importance and that others (the gentry, the titled nobility) were higher still.³⁴

While the inclusion of improper dress or proud speech is perfectly conventional, then, the expression of these sins has a distinctly local and lay

31. In citations from the Bolton Hours, single quotes go around words that a scribe added in the margins or between lines; in this case, ‘was’ is to be found sandwiched above the line ending “worthy [to]”; square brackets signal words that have faded and are thus difficult to read. I follow the scribe’s orthography except to expand abbreviations, which are italicized. I am indebted to Barratt’s edition of this formula.

32. *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, ed. W. Nelson Francis, Early English Text Society, o.s., 217 (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 16; and see Richard Newhauser, *The Treatise on Vices and Virtues in Latin and the Vernacular* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993), p. 60.

33. Chaucer’s Parson has the following to say about pride in one’s station: “Eek for to pride hym of his gentrie is ful greet folie; for ofte tyme the gentrie of the body binymeth the gentrie of the soule; and eek we ben alle of o fader and of o mooder; and alle we been of o nature, roten and corrupt, both riche and povre. / For sothe, o manere gentrie is for to preise, that apparailleth mannes corage with vertues and moralitees, and maketh hym Cristes child” (*The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987], X.460–61). Robert Mannyng of Brunne similarly exhorts, “Of alle folyys hyt ys þe flour / For þy godenesse to haue wrldes honour. / Ȝyf þou for pryde art outrage / Þat þou art come of hegh lynage, / Beþenke þe weyl fro whenne þou cam: / Alle we were of adam” (*Handlyng Synne*, ed. Idelle Sullens [Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1983], lines 3031–36).

34. See Kermodé, *Medieval Merchants*, pp. 81–83, for a Bolton/Blakburn family tree, illustrating their connections to other influential mercantile and gentry families in York (the Aldestonemores, Boweses, Gascoignes, Holbecks, Kirkebys, Louths, and Ormesheads) as well as their intermarriages with members of the gentry.

mercantile tinge. In a devotional context, “commendacioun” signals the virtue of obedience, a sign of humility (and hence an antidote to pride) that extends to include embracing the role of your own group. But “commendacioun”—and seeking too much of it—is a social problem, too: in the mercantile group to which the Boltons belonged, sons rarely survived long enough to inherit the family business. As a result, among the mercantile families in York, financial affluence frequently depended upon intermarriage and not, as we might expect, on patrilineal inheritance.³⁵ Hence, while inveighing against improper dress or proud speech is to be expected in a late-medieval discussion of pride, for the Boltons and Blakburns in particular, acting out against one’s peers in these ways could have serious financial and social ramifications, especially in securing a future match between two families. Feuds or speaking proudly—let alone having too much pride in one’s clothing or “werldys gude hafeyng”—might chip away at a community that relied on the circulation of goods from one family to another. A stable community would surely have been essential to a class of individuals whose family businesses survived, as Jenny Kermode explains, an average of only two generations and for whom individual wealth “was continually redistributed amongst other members of the merchant group in bequests and through marriage.”³⁶ In such a context, relationships with neighbors would matter as much—if not more—than relationships with immediate family members.

This was, then, a culture in which it could literally pay to know your neighbors well and in which understanding what you were (and were not) entitled to must have been crucial. Not surprisingly, then, the form for confessing avarice highlights not merely the desire to withhold worldly goods from others in need, but also one’s *right* to goods:

‘Auericia.’ Also þat I haue synnyd in *couytyse*. Þat I haue noght hawdyn
me paid of þe state & þe degre thatt god has sent me, bott couett wyrshpe
of þe warld, mar þan me hyght to do. & Also þat I haue sett my herte, of

35. Ibid., pp. 78–81, 111–15. For a similar claim, see Rees Jones and Riddy, “Bolton Hours of York,” p. 245.

36. Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, p. 80. Sylvia L. Thrupp, writing about London, remarks that “marriage was recognized as one of the best means of obtaining capital for a merchant’s business, and the need of capital was very great” (*The Merchant Class of Medieval London* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1948], p. 29). Moreover, as Thrupp notes, Caxton observed that in London, “merchant families retained a high status” for a short span of time—no more than three generations—“sons somehow failing to inherit the business capacity of their fathers and consequently tending to sink in the social scale” (p. 191). Many merchants left no male heir at all, whether because of disease or because sons took other occupations (pp. 200–206); it hence seems at least possible that in London, as in York, merchant wealth circulated among families, horizontally, rather than vertically down a family line.

fals couytyse, for to desyre any thyng þat I haue no ryght to, & þat I haue takyn or withhaldyn þat att I had no ryght to. Whar for I cry god almyghty mercy. (fol. 2r)

Here, the author emphasizes desiring what is beyond one's station in particular, including phrases such as "state" and "degre" and repenting specifically of having coveted "wyrshpe of þe warld, *mar þan me hyght to do*." Yet again, the author of the confessional formula suggests that, commensurate with social standing, there is in fact an appropriate degree to which one might covet worldly worship. Neither is it sinful to desire what one is legally entitled to: the problem is in desiring what "I haue no *ryght* to," or taking or withholding what "I had no *ryght* to." As Roger Ladd points out, in antimercantile satire, merchants were often depicted as avaricious;³⁷ it is not difficult to see how this confessional formula pushes against such caricatures by redefining what constitutes avarice in the first place. Pride and avarice both have their corresponding virtues (humility and largesse), but here, the formula redefines those virtues in mercantile terms. In this context, pride itself can be virtuous, provided it corresponds to one's social station and does not offend other members of the mercantile community; and seeking profit via trade can similarly be virtuous, provided one does not overstep one's bounds.³⁸ Given the conflict between some of the craft guilds and the ruling elite of York, particularly in the early and mid-fifteenth centuries, connecting virtue to legal profit is a canny move: understood in the context of the labor statutes of 1363–64, which artificially divided labor in order to restrict the practices of craft guilds and benefit members of the mercantile oligarchy, the formula might remind its reader that merchants were not subjected to the same legal restrictions as members of craft guilds.³⁹ Put another way, a York merchant who had the status of a Bolton or a Blackburn had the "ryght to" just about anything.

Preoccupations that are consonant with a mercantile community are nowhere more apparent than in the confessional formula's rendition of the

37. Roger A. Ladd, *Antimerchantism in Late Medieval English Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 18–20.

38. One is here reminded of the special status accorded to merchants in the section on greed in MS Laud 463, a poem about the seven deadly sins: "Or marchaund wiþ hise marchandise / To loken in alle kynne wise, / Hou myche he may wiþ treuthe winne, / þat no treche-rie is inne" ("Septem peccata mortalia," in *Die Kildare-Gedichte: die ältesten mitttelenglischen Denkmäler in anglo-irischer Überlieferung*, ed. W. Heuser [Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1904], p. 191; emphasis added).

39. Sarah Beckwith characterizes these statutes as a "mercantile-enforced fantasy of a division of labor"; the net result was that each craftsperson must choose one craft and use no other (*Signifying God*, p. 48); see also Heather Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: An Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 112–21.

Ten Commandments. The section on the commandments in the Bolton Hours fails to include, as Barratt has noted, the fourth and fifth commandments to honor one's parents and not to kill, substituting instead Christ's dictum to love one's neighbor as oneself. Barratt associates this absence with a deficiency in formal religious education among the lay bourgeoisie; but I find it unlikely that someone would confuse such a central tenet of the faith.⁴⁰ Medieval commentaries on the Decalogue were widespread and popular, to say nothing of longer works such as *Dives and Pauper*,⁴¹ mnemonic vernacular poems such as appeared in the widespread *Speculum Christiani*,⁴² or the Decalogue's regular appearance in confessional and didactic works. One such work not only is from Yorkshire but also survives in over forty copies: the *Speculum vitae*, the only verse translation of the *Somme le roi*.⁴³ There, the author works the Decalogue into his intricate presentation of the components of the *Pater Noster*—and he includes the fourth and fifth commandments in precisely the right spots (in fact reserving a long section advocating for the proper treatment of one's parents).⁴⁴

If we think of these missing commandments in the Bolton Hours as moments of revision rather than accidental omissions, then, framing the precepts in terms of loving your neighbor and omitting the commandments addressing familial honor and homicide make sense: because intermarriage was as important as inheritance, it should not be surprising that a merchant family member would have been perhaps more concerned about falling out of step with his or her neighbors than with his or her parents. What is more, commandments four through ten map onto the second commandment of the New Law—to love your neighbor as yourself.⁴⁵ Indeed, the author of *Dives and Pauper* presents the fifth commandment as largely allegorical, identify-

40. Barratt, "Enveloped In Synne," p. 6.

41. *Dives and Pauper*, ed. Priscilla Heath Barnum, Early English Text Society, o.s., 275, 285, 323 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, 1980, 2004).

42. *Speculum Christiani: A Middle English Religious Treatise of the 14th Century*, ed. Gustaf Holmstedt, Early English Text Society, o.s., 182 (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. clxxx–ccii, 16–38. Some of the priests attached to York Minster owned this pastoral manual, which in York circulated widely. See Vincent Gillespie, "Chichele's Church: Vernacular Theology in England after Thomas Arundel," in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 3–42, p. 22.

43. *Speculum vitae: A Reading Edition*, ed. Ralph Hanna, Early English Text Society, o.s., 331 and 332 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), lines 959–1220. On the poem's provenance, see pp. lxiii–lxx; and on the *Speculum* author's adaptation of the *Somme*, see p. lxxii.

44. *Ibid.*, lines 1045–64.

45. I owe this point to Nicholas Watson. As the author of the *Speculum vitae* puts it, "Þe other seuen [commandments] may a man kenne / How he sal haue hym onence alle men / Þat here his euencrysten bene" (lines 1041–43).

ing as “manslaute” such (seemingly) minor sins as backbiting, flattery, and duplicity.⁴⁶ The author of the confessional formula in the Bolton Hours, in other words, both modifies the commandments to suit his or her immediate circumstances and, in doing so, draws on popular renditions of the sins of the mouth as tantamount to spiritual homicide.

This section reads as follows: “Also þat I haue noght lufyd my neuyn crystyn als me aght to do na noght done to þham⁴⁷ als I walde þai dyd to me in worde and dede. Also þat I haue bene glade of þaire euylle fayre and sorowefull of þer wele fare, I cry God mercy” (fol. 3r). In raising the issue of backbiting and schadenfreude, the author obliquely echoes descriptions of “al maner manslauth vnleful, boþin bodyly & gostlyche” such as are found in *Dives and Pauper*.⁴⁸ The author of *Dives and Pauper* affirms that “þe Iewys slowyn Crist with her tungis nout with her hondis”; “& þerfor seith þe lawe þat he þat sleth his broþir with his hond & he þat hatyth his broþir & he þat bacbytith his broþir, alle thre been mansleeris.”⁴⁹ Put another way, while the confessional formula does not explicitly include the fourth and fifth commandments, Christ’s dictum provides a handy substitute: it reframes the fifth commandment in terms that would have been relevant to York’s mercantile oligarchy. In this social group, doing what you say you will is crucial for the community to function well. So, too, to be “glade of euylle fayre” could be destructive. To wit, the uprising against John Gysburn in 1380 pitted merchants against each other in a conflict that would surely not have been good for the community or for business.⁵⁰ In substituting the sin of

46. *Dives and Pauper*, I.13; I.2.1–31. This approach is common in other catechetical works, too, including the treatment of homicide in *Pore Caitif* and in the fifteenth-century *Jacob’s Well*. On this issue see Moira Fitzgibbons, “Poverty, Dignity, and Lay Spirituality in *Pore Caitif* and *Jacob’s Well*,” *Medium Ævum* 77 (2008): 222–40, pp. 231–32; and see *Speculum vitae*, lines 1065–1104, especially 1099–1104.

47. The scribe employs a problematic form of the third-person-plural object pronoun (them). His or her usual form is þhm, with an abbreviation mark above the m. The alternate form is þame (fols. 1v line 8, 209v penultimate line, and 210v lines 15–16). The predominant form is not attested in Middle English: see A. McIntosh et al., eds., *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* [LALME], 4 vols. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986), 4:14. The scribe’s orthography is occasionally, as in this case, difficult to parse: he could be intending yham here, a form that is attested in LALME. For a discussion of the similar formation of y and þ in northern script, see LALME 4:xi. Cf. Barratt, who does not record the odd þ-h or y-h combination, supplying “þam” when the scribe records þhm with the abbreviation mark.

48. *Dives and Pauper*, I.2.1.

49. Ibid., I.2.2. Chaucer’s Parson defines spiritual manslaughter in similar terms, including hate, backbiting, and wicked counsel (X.563–66).

50. Gysburn’s opponents installed another merchant, Simon de Quixlay, as mayor; his opponents included merchants, aldermen, and other influential denizens of York (Kermode, *Medieval Merchants*, 57).

spiritual homicide for two of the Old Testament commandments, this formula expresses a keen awareness of the importance of the community, both economically and socially.

In the section guiding the penitent reader through the ninth and tenth commandments, the confessional formula returns yet again to the mercantile necessity of “consolidat[ing] political and commercial associations” through intermarriage and bequest, rather than through patrilineal inheritance.⁵¹ In so doing, it draws on distinctions between moveable and immoveable property:

Also þat I haue desyryd myn neghtbure house, land, rent, tenement or any thyng þat may noght be lyftyd or rasyd fra þe gronde, als thyng þat es stedfaste.

Also þat I haue desyryd þe wyfe ‘husbond’ of my neghtbur or of my neuyn crystyn, his madyn or his seruant or gold or syluer or any oþer warldis ryches þe whylke I haue no ryght to [. . .] (fols. 3v–4r)

The emphasis here on the legal right to profit and to own goods is reminiscent of the formula’s presentation of avarice, and in this mash-up of commandments 7, 9, and 10, the author clearly associates one’s spouse with one’s material goods.⁵² Barratt calls associating one’s husband or wife with one’s money “unfortunate,” and this is certainly true.⁵³ But we should also consider why the confessional formula of a successful mercantile family might have associated marriage and money in this way. This passage does not necessarily present husbands and wives as analogous to money so much as regard marriage as facilitating financial and communal stability. In this context, desiring someone else’s husband or wife might be threatening not because of sins of concupiscence but rather because of the redistribution of mercantile money through marriage: you are not lecherous, but rather wish for the station and financial stability of that husband or wife—you wish, in the words of the Bolton Hours, for that person’s “gold or syluer or any oþer warldis ryches þe whylke I haue no ryght to.” This confessional formula suggests that for York’s urban elite, the most alarming sins included wishing for too much financial success, when it was in fact crucial that each family of the elite cadre play its part.

51. Ibid., p. 81.

52. The formula includes the sixth commandment, but it does so in a single clause: “Also þat I haue synnyd flesly *with* any [‘man’] woman outhur weddyd or unweddyd, syb or fremyd, I cry god mercy” (fol. 3v).

53. Barratt, “Envoluped In Synne,” pp. 11–12.

Lay-Produced Penitential Literature?

Confessional formulas and documents like them have been almost entirely overlooked, perhaps because, as Barratt surmises, they are regarded as boring;⁵⁴ or perhaps because, although there are so many of them, so few appear in critical editions. It may be, too, that we have assumed that they replicate the concerns of manuals for confessors and didactic manuals for the laity and are thus not really worth examining in detail.⁵⁵ But as Barratt points out, confessional formulas “are not nearly as formulaic as a cursory acquaintance might suggest [. . .] and in their own way they present in microcosm much information on lay knowledge of the basics of the faith.”⁵⁶ This subgenre of confessional literature is distinct from *summae confessorum* and manuals for parish priests (such as Mirk’s *Instructions for Parish Priests*), in that it is not necessarily written by clerics. Rather, as in the case of the Bolton Hours, confessional forms were sometimes composed by the very laypeople who were to use them. Both the formula of the Bolton Hours and another fifteenth-century lay adaptation of a clerical work on penance, Peter Idley’s *Instructions to His Son* (c. 1440–55), a reworking of Robert Mannyng of Brunne’s *Handlyng Synne*, do not present a “matrix of sins,” in Cornett’s turn-of-phrase, but rather highlight details both pertinent to the community and frequently legal in nature.⁵⁷ Like the Bolton Hours, Idley’s adaptation, while not a formula *per se*, reveals how laypeople thought about, thought with, and used confession.

In this way, the form of confession may have something unique to tell us about confessional discourse in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Both the Bolton Hours form of confession and Idley’s *Instructions* suggest that con-

54. Ibid., p. 5.

55. Such didactic manuals might include Dan Michel’s *Ayenbite of Inwit* (c. 1340) and other translations of *Somme le roi* such as *The Book of Vices and Virtues* (c. 1400); Robert Mannyng of Brunne’s *Handlyng Synne* (c. 1317) and *Of Shrifte and Penance* (late fourteenth / early fifteenth century), both translations of the *Manuel de pechiez*; *The Boke of Penance* (found in one manuscript of *Cursor mundi*, c. 1300); *Clensyng of Mannes Sowle* (late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, a redaction of Raymond of Peñaforte’s *Summa casuum poenitentiae*). For information about the vernacular works in particular, see Raymo, “Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction,” pp. 225–378, 2467–582. H. G. Pfander includes all of the above in his category of “manuals of religious instruction”; see “Some Medieval Manuals of Religious Instruction in England and Observations on Chaucer’s Parson’s Tale,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 35 (1936): 243–58, pp. 250–51.

56. Barratt, “Enveloped In Synne,” p. 5.

57. *Peter Idley’s Instructions to His Son*, ed. Charlotte D’Evelyn (London: Oxford University Press, 1935). On the dating of Idley’s text and its relationship to both Mannyng and Lydgate, see Matthew Giancarlo, “Dressing up a ‘Galaunt’: Traditional Piety and Fashionable Politics in Peter Idley’s ‘Translacions’ of Mannyng and Lydgate,” in Gillespie and Ghosh, *After Arundel*, 430–47, pp. 429–30.

fession was malleable, not a static sacrament whose meaning was assigned only by clerics. On the one hand, there is no reason to suppose that anybody interpreted confession in different terms than it was taught to them: a popular text like *The Pricke of Conscience*—apocalyptic, but drawing heavily from confessional metaphors—as well as that of *Speculum vitae* or *Speculum Christiani*⁵⁸ would seem to suggest that popular reception of confessional discourse did not deviate very much from clerical didacticism. On the other hand, attending to differences where they occur may have much to tell us. In the *Series*, for instance, Hoccleve engages with taxonomies of sin partly to suggest that he is sane, sinless, and deserves reintegration into the community.⁵⁹ For his part, in adapting Mannyng's text, Idley "reflects his social, religious, and political environment," as Matthew Giancarlo explains.⁶⁰ Idley's adaptation emphasizes, for example, the legal aspects of many of the commandments and Seven Deadly Sins:⁶¹ in this, both Idley's desire that his son pursue a career in law and his experience as a bailiff and property manager are abundantly clear.⁶² Idley's text, like that of the Bolton Hours, shapes the materials of confession to its own ends, attempting to reconcile the demands of the secular world with the requirements of the faith.

We have tended to assume that confessional literature always has something to tell us about lay responses to penitence, especially if this literature

58. *The Prick of Conscience* survives in over 100 manuscript copies; *Speculum vitae*, a late fourteenth-century translation of the *Somme le roi*, is extant in over forty manuscripts, as is the *Speculum Christiani*.

59. Robyn Malo, "Penitential Discourse in Hoccleve's *Series*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 34 (2012): 277–305.

60. "Dressing up a 'Galaunt,'" p. 430. Giancarlo argues that Idley excises material that emphasizes the distinction between lay and clerical roles, involved as he is in an "estates-crossing task [. . .] as a layman adapting a clerical text" (p. 442).

61. Idley frequently explains the occasional legal necessity of various acts that might seem to violate a commandment or constitute a deadly sin; throughout the text, he also emphasizes the law and his experience in managing tenants. Giancarlo outlines many of the differences between Idley and Mannyng (pp. 432–41). To those Giancarlo notes, I would add or underscore the following sections, which diverge significantly from *Handlyng Synne*: in the commentary on the fourth commandment to honor your parents, Idley includes a lengthy exhortation that parents not select "thyn heire to be thyn executoure" (Iia, lines 1230, 1237, 1244, 1251, 1258); Idley returns to the possible treachery of executors in his commentary on covetousness, including a tale of three dishonest executors (Iib, lines 1624–1813). Idley's rendition of the ninth commandment reads as an advice to princes, abhorring kings who take what is not lawfully theirs (IIa, lines 2921–73).

62. I, lines 127–28. Idley's text has been dated to circa 1440–55. During this period and until 1447, Idley, an esquire, held the position of bailiff for the Honour of Wallingford and of St. Valery. As bailiff, Idley's primary duties included collecting rents, dues, and administering local justice; in 1443, he also acquired the lease of two mills and was responsible for maintaining these properties.

has been translated into English.⁶³ Katherine C. Little has suggested that all such texts are “lay-oriented,”⁶⁴ and this is surely the case. Recent work on Carthusian houses in particular in fifteenth-century England has taught us that at least some laypeople were very interested in contemplative, even monastic, devotional works, like Walter Hilton’s *Scale of Perfection* or the *Abbey of the Holy Ghost*; Nicole Rice has shown how spiritually ambitious laypeople sought out works of religious instruction that helped them to live a contemplative life in the world.⁶⁵ At the same time, as Rice illustrates, such works may well have circumscribed lay piety, limiting it to a certain, and interior, state of being rather than an exterior state of acting.⁶⁶ Rice’s point implies that while laypeople were clearly interested in reading works of spiritual instruction, we should consider to what degree these works express *clerical* beliefs about what the laity should know. This cautionary note is borne out by the relatively limited circulation of the fourteenth-century *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which seems largely to have been kept away from lay readers, as was Marguerite Porete’s *Mirror of Simple Souls*.⁶⁷ The corollary, I would argue, is that we must revisit our catch-all use of the term “lay-oriented”: what precisely does it mean? I can’t help but wonder to what extent “lay-oriented” assumes an inherent passivity in the consumption of books by laypeople; or to what extent the term depends upon an unstated binary: that laypeople were *either* heterodox *or* compliant, mainstream Christians whose practices were in perfect step with the church teaching—about confession, for instance—outlined in clerical *summae*.⁶⁸ But as the confessional formula of the Bolton Hours indicates, the manuscript contexts of individual works of catechesis and devotion have a more complex story to tell. Attending to these contexts may, in some cases at least, reveal whether we might consider an individual copy of a text lay-copied, lay-produced, or both; Robert Thornton’s copy of the *Abbey of the Holy Ghost* would be one such instance. What might other such works tell us? In the case of lay-produced works like the Bolton Hours or Idley’s

63. As Katherine C. Little puts it, “the translation of penitential manuals for a non-Latinate audience, an audience that presumably includes some laity, entails a shift in attention from the clerical to the lay role in the penitential process.” *Confession and Resistance: Defining the Self in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), p. 50.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

65. Nicole Rice, *Lay Piety and Religious Discipline in Middle English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

66. *Ibid.*, especially pp. 17–46.

67. See Vincent Gillespie, “Vernacular Books of Religion,” in *Looking in Holy Books: Essays on Late Medieval Religious Writing in England* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 145–73, pp. 155–56.

68. There is a growing body of work on the continuities of practice and belief between so-called mainstream and heterodox Christians. See *Wycliffite Controversies*, ed. Mishtooni Bose and J. Patrick Hornbeck III (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011); and Gillespie and Ghosh, *After Arundel*.

Instructions, laypeople adapted the texts they enscribed to better suit their environments. There is no reason to suppose they did so out of ignorance. It seems obvious to say, but English penitential literature does not inevitably tell us something about lay attitudes just because it is in English. We need to develop a more radical way of thinking about devotional literature that acknowledges the possibility that lay readers did not always mirror clerical interests and concerns—an approach that might encompass the worldview of the Bolton Hours’ confessional formula, which explores how virtuous, money-making participants in the active life might achieve salvation too.

Note

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A London Legal Miscellany, Popular Law, and Medieval Print Culture

KATHLEEN E. KENNEDY

Initially, what I call “Arnold’s Book” was a manuscript miscellany compiled by Richard Arnold, a London haberdasher who played an active role in the complicated mercantile world of late fifteenth-century England. This sort of miscellany, a kind of “household book,” was hugely common in late-medieval English culture. What is unique is the afterlife of Arnold’s miscellany; despite the popularity of miscellanies, Arnold’s Book was the only English medieval miscellany ever to be printed on a handpress, and texts known from his book remained in print until at least 1608. Above all, Arnold’s Book highlights the perhaps surprising popularity of the law in late-medieval England. Our modern perceptions of popularity seem to be linked firmly to entertainment, Chaucerian “solace.” Yet manuscript and early print evidence challenges any attempt to apply such a modern definition of popularity uncritically to culture of the late-medieval period. It is worth recalling that Chaucer himself was concerned with “sentence” as well as “solace,” and fifteenth-century audiences seem to have been even more interested in the former than the latter. Likewise, I contend that Arnold’s translated legal acquisitions figure largely into the decision to print his manuscript: its English law in English was desired by the literate classes, and the mass reproduction newly offered by print capitalized on the (currently unacknowledged) popularity of this material already well-established in manuscript.

From the 1540s onward there was a boom of English legal printing, but scholars have rarely connected this innovation to earlier printing efforts, much less to the manuscript era. The lacuna in English law may be more apparent than real. The legal materials contained in manuscript household

books have gone without sustained exploration by scholars. Likewise, unofficial legal translations in early print continue to be little known. As I will show, both of these types of sources contain examples of law in English. Arnold's Book remains a normal example of one particular kind of household book, and in its printing, I argue, it tested the market for vernacular legal works. The interest Arnold's Book generated in print seems to be a missing link between medieval manuscript culture and the eventual burst of vernacular legal printing.

While sensational, none of the events of Arnold's life are particularly unprecedented for merchants of his era. Active from the 1470s into the 1490s, Richard Arnold appears in city documents as "haberdasher and citizen of London," while in royal and international notarial documents he is styled "merchant" or "esquire." Though never an alderman, Arnold moved among the highest levels of London society.¹ From the 1470s to the 1490s Arnold was involved with the important London Bridge rents and his parish, St. Magnus the Martyr.² By the 1490s he had sons old enough to act as his factor in Spain, and to be accused of stealing gold rings.³ He owned the ship *Christopher Arnold*, which was taken by pirates traveling between London and Zeeland; with his brother-in-law's assistance, the Garter King of Arms, John Wrythe (a family later known as Wriothesley), Arnold got the matter brought before the King of the Romans, Maximilian I.⁴ He also traveled himself. In 1488 he spoke imprudently enough to a Lombard in Berghen op Zoom that he was incarcerated in Sluys on suspicion of being a spy. Apparently Margaret

1. See Alfred P. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London: Temp. Henry III–1912* (London: Corporation of the City of London, 1912); Kew, National Archives C 131/78/18 and C 131/244/10; and W. H. B. Bird, ed. *Calendar of the Close Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office; Edward IV*, vol. 2, *a.d. 1486–1476* (London: Her Majesty's Stationer's Office, 1953), p. 418.

2. Kew, National Archives C 1/52/1. After signature A, Arnold's Book is foliated in the lower margin; in the first signature I will cite as "Arnold" by signature, and thereafter by folio. I have not examined enough copies of Arnold's Book to make claims about issues, and will therefore cite the copy available on Early English Books Online as a *de facto* "standard" copy, and the most accessible to my audience (STC 782). Arnold, fol. 46v is undated, but the London Bridge Wardens mentioned served together only one year, 1472–73. See Reginald Sharpe, ed. *Calendar of London Letter-Books: L Edward IV–Henry VII* (London, Corporation of the City of London: 1912), fol. 104b. This provides one of the earlier dates apparent in the Book. Arnold, fols. 85r–87r is an example of a document suggesting dates in the 1490s. STC 782. *In this booke is conteyned the names of ye baylifs custos mairs and sherefs of the cite of londo[n]*, [Adriaen van Berghen: Antwerp, 1503?].

3. Arnold, fol. 88v (Nicholas Arnold); Kew, National Archives C 1/218/31 (Thomas Arnold). That Richard is named in the Chancery case rather than Thomas suggests that Thomas might not yet have reached his legal majority.

4. See Arnold, fols. 48r–50r; and Linne Mooney, "A New Manuscript by the Hammond Scribe," in *The English Medieval Book: Studies in Memory of Jeremy Griffiths*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards, Vincent Gillespie, and Ralph Hanna (London: British Library, 2000), pp. 113–23.

of York, Dowager Duchess of Burgundy cleared Arnold's name, saying about him that "she knew well the said Richard" and that "he was a good and honest merchant."⁵ Arnold acted as a purveyor for Sir Reginald Bray's attempts to provender Henry's army in 1489; Bray was well known for his close associations with the king.⁶ I can find no evidence that Arnold lived beyond the early 1490s either in his Book or elsewhere.⁷ Indeed, according to Windsor Herald, Charles Wriothesley, Richard Arnold's heir was his sister Eleanor Arnold, who was dead before 1502.⁸ Arguing with Maximilian I, working for Reginald Bray, and being spoken for by Margaret of York all suggest an international merchant at the height of a long career, a career illustrated in his Book.

Much early print was appropriated from the manuscript tradition: Seth Lerer formulates an "idea not merely of an early modern print culture but maybe even of a 'medieval' print culture—a culture of appropriation that blurs the historical boundaries between manuscripts and early printed books."⁹ Printers set type from manuscript copies of literature frequently, and scholars

5. See Arnold, fols. 88r–89r. The initial offense apparently occurred during the annual Easter Mart, one of the two largest fairs of the year in Berghen op Zoom.

6. See *ibid.*, fol. 44v.

7. Francis Douce claimed Arnold lived into the 1520s to oversee both complete editions of his Book. Douce based his opinion on that of Stowe. Francis Douce, *The Customs of London, Otherwise Called Arnold's Chronicle*, 2nd ed. (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1811), pp. v–vi. This notion continues to be repeated, for example in "Arnold, Richard (d. c.1521)," by Peter C. Herman, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/681> (accessed January 20, 2013). The chronicle as we have it in the earlier edition extends to 1502–3. While this may be Arnold's own material, I think it is more likely that it was brought up to date with this material before its printing, just as Peter Treveris made sure this chronicle was updated again in the 1520s.

8. "Wriothesley, Charles (1508–1562)," by Gordon Kipling, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30071> (accessed January 20, 2013) and "Writhe, John (d. 1504)," by Adrian Ailes, in *ibid.*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30074> (accessed January 20, 2013). Eleanor was Charles's step-grandmother, and died in time for her husband, John Writhe, to remarry and have two more children before his death in 1504. For the epitaph on which Arnold's sister is named as his heir, see the edition of Wriothesley's chronicle, William Hamilton, ed., *A Chronicle of England during the Reigns of the Tudors from a.d. 1485–1559* (London: Camden Society, 1875), pp. viii–ix.

9. Miscellanies and similar collected volumes have been popular topics recently. For a small sample of this discussion, see Seth Lerer, "Medieval English Literature and the Idea of the Anthology," *PMLA* 118 (2003): 1251–67; and Derek Pearsall, "The Whole Book: Late Medieval English Manuscript Miscellanies and Their Modern Interpreters," in *Imagining the Book*, ed. Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 17–29. For the booklets often constituting miscellanies, see Alexandra Gillespie's helpful overview, "Medieval Books, Their Booklets, and Booklet Theory," *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700* 16 (2011): 1–29; also her "Caxton's Chaucer and Lydgate Quartos: Miscellanies from Manuscript to Print," *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 12 (2000): 1–25, p. 1; Lerer, "Medieval English Literature," p. 1260.

have shown that they did this in the cases of works by Chaucer and Lydgate, among other medieval authors. However, printers employed manuscript copies of popular nonliterary texts as well: notable among these were books of hours and law texts. Arnold's Book is another example of such a manuscript exemplar moving into print.

Since we are used to thinking of the book of hours as the most popular form of manuscript of the Middle Ages, such books provide a good comparison with legal texts in tracing the development of "medieval print." Nigel Morgan has traced over 800 extant copies of the manuscript book of hours made for use in England: Mary Erler identifies twenty-nine surviving editions of the Sarum book of hours printed before 1500 alone.¹⁰ In comparison, Donald Skemer has found nearly 500 manuscript copies of statute collections extant from medieval England; if we add copies of other legal texts such as registers of writs (a type of formulary) and law reports, the mass of English law manuscripts must nearly equal that of books of hours.¹¹ In contrast to bespoke manuscript production, printing was speculative, and the expense of printing an unpopular edition might only be recouped decades later, or not at all.¹² In order to cover the risk of printing anything new or chancy, printers had to maintain strong catalogs of marketable stock, and in the early days of printing such proof could only come from the manuscript tradition. Books of hours and law books began to be printed at the same time and were among the earliest books printed in England. Legal texts were printed as early as the

10. Eamon Duffy cites Nigel Morgan's personal database in *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 3, n. 2, and since then Morgan has identified several dozen more manuscripts, which figure he generously shared with me. See also Mary Erler, "Devotional Literature," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 3, 1400–1557, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 495–525, p. 502.

11. For various counts of statute collections, see Don C. Skemer, "From Archives to the Book Trade: Private Statute Rolls in England, 1285–1307," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 16 (1995): 193–206, n. 16; "Sir William Breton's Book: Production of *Statuta Angliae* in the Late Thirteenth Century," in *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700*, ed. Peter Beal and Jeremy Griffiths (London: British Library, 1997), 24–51, p. 24; and "Reading the Law: Statute Books and the Private Transmission of Knowledge in Late Medieval England," in *Learning the Law: Teaching and the Transmission of Law in England, 1150–1900*, ed. Jonathan A. Bush and Alain Wijffels (London: British Library, 1999), pp. 115–31; note the correction to these numbers, p. 115. I am aware of no count of all manuscript copies of the other types of manuscripts, but my experience in the main repositories of English legal manuscripts, the British Library, the Bodleian Library, Cambridge University Library, and the Free Library of Philadelphia, suggests to me that the total number must be very close to Morgan's count of books of hours.

12. For example, the mammoth *La Graunde Abridgement* for which "almost a half century elapsed before the full edition of the *Abridgement* was disposed of and the producers' capital refunded": Howard Jay Graham, "The Book That 'Made' the Common Law: The First Printing of Fitzherbert's *La Graunde Abridgement*, 1514–16," *Law Library Journal* 51 (1958): 100–116, p. 113.

reign of Richard III, and law printing was standardized by the end of Henry VII's reign.¹³

In manuscript, Arnold's Book represents a little-studied subset of household books particularly invested in law that I will call "civic legal miscellanies."¹⁴ Civic legal miscellanies had a long history before the print era, and it is striking to page through Arnold's Book and other such volumes and find a sort of updated version of the *Liber Horn*, *Liber Albus*, and other volumes compiled for the London Guildhall by the early fourteenth-century chamberlain Andrew Horn and early fifteenth-century city clerk John Carpenter. Ralph Hanna places Horn's compilation efforts within the context of a London community "committed to the production of large legal books for local use."¹⁵ Hanna shows how Horn's materials situated London civic law carefully within both statute law and national history.¹⁶ Hanna illustrates an apparently widely held belief that "this distinctive local culture possesses unique forms of life that must be preserved—in this case, as an allegedly petrified history, one of inarguable and immutable 'ancient customs and liberties.'"¹⁷ However, this pretense at petrification was always in tension with the accretive nature of the texts so preserved. Horn's collections were complete and compendious, but then so was Carpenter's collection a hundred years later.

Individuals like Arnold collected selections of these standard Guildhall agglomerations, and added to them formulary-like materials collected from their own business lives, developing civic legal miscellanies personalized for specific owners' uses. In this way individuals wrote themselves into the civic legal memory that preserved the historical and legal traditions making up London's cultural history.¹⁸ As Hanna's work would lead us to suspect, such miscellanies had already developed by the fourteenth century, and they develop further in the fifteenth century. London, British Library MS Egerton 2885, a compilation by a late fourteenth-century London fishmonger (as had been Horn before him), begins with a short chronicle before moving into London charters such as those copied in the *Liber Horn*, followed by selected legal materials pertaining to the fish trade itself. Likewise, London, British Library

13. STC 9347, *Statuta ap[u]d westmonasteriu[m] edita anno primo Regis Ricardi tercij* [London: Machlinia, 1484?].

14. Caroline Barron calls these books "civic compilations" in "The Political Culture of Medieval London," in *The Fifteenth Century*, vol. 4, *Political Culture in Late Medieval Britain*, ed. Linda Clark and Christine Carpenter (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), 111–32, p. 126.

15. Ralph Hanna, *London Literature, 1300–1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 54.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

18. Hanna describes the corporate part of this process on p. 59.

MS Additional 38131 includes historical texts, then copies of London charters and other London legal records, then laws pertinent to the fishmongers and merchant tailors of London.¹⁹ London, British Library MS Additional 37791 is similar to both of these fourteenth-century examples, with the exception that it adds material specific to King's Lynn, a town that shared Oxford's charter, that itself shared London's charter. Thus, Additional 37791 demonstrates how London miscellanies might retain their usefulness in locales far from the capital. All of the fourteenth-century and early fifteenth-century examples of this form of which I am aware are in Latin and French.²⁰

After the early fifteenth century, civic legal miscellanies illustrate a strong preference for legal texts translated into English, a trend notable in many areas of professional English law.²¹ The most compendious example of this form of which I am aware is a set of manuscripts now at Trinity College, Cambridge and the British Library. These were ordered by the London draper, alderman, and sometime mayor Sir Thomas Cook and, based on the paper stocks, scribe, and Cook's career, seem to date to the late 1460s or 1470s.²² Linne Mooney calls the set an "Everyman encyclopedia of knowledge for a member of London's fifteenth-century merchant class" in three volumes.²³ One concentrated on medicine. One was a complete copy of the New Statutes translated into English, and one contained history and London law. Copied by the Hammond Scribe, this expansive civic legal miscellany relates directly to Arnold's

19. For more on this miscellany and its owner, Thomas Carleton, see Hannes Kleineke, "Carleton's Book: William FitzStephen's 'Description of London' in a Late Fourteenth-Century Common-Place Book," *Historical Research* 74 (2001): 117–26.

20. Two other miscellanies of similar character are Oxford, Bodleian MS Gough London 10 and Hatfield House, Cecil Papers MS 281. Mary-Rose McLaren dates Gough London 10 to 1470 based on its chronicle, and it appears to have been useful to someone related to the Goldsmith's guild. McLaren dates Cecil Papers 281 to 1461. Mary-Rose McLaren, *The London Chronicles of the Fifteenth Century: A Revolution in English Writing* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Brewer, 2001), pp. 107, 114. Further, Barron references several more early fourteenth-century civic legal miscellanies in "The Political Culture of Medieval London," pp. 124–32.

21. For different overviews of the progress of English into legal use in the fifteenth century, see John Fisher, "Chancery and the Emergence of Standard Written English in the Fifteenth Century," *Speculum* 52 (1977): 870–99; and, more recently, Mark Ormrod, "The Use of English: Language, Law, and Political Culture in Fourteenth-Century England," *Speculum* 78 (2003): 750–87. For earlier legal language, see Paul Brand, "The Languages of the Law in Later Medieval England," in *Multilingualism in Later Medieval Britain*, ed. D. A. Trotter (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. 63–76.

22. Linne Mooney, "The Scribe," in *Sex, Aging, and Death in a Medieval Compendium*, ed. M. Theresa Taormina (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2006), 55–63, p. 61; and Daniel Mosser, "Dating the Manuscripts of the 'Hammond Scribe': What the Paper Evidence Tells Us," *Journal of the Early Book Society* 10 (2007): 31–70, p. 44.

23. Mooney, "The Scribe," p. 60. Cambridge, Trinity College MSS R.14.52, and O.3.11. The statute collection that likely belongs with the set is London, British Library MS Harley 4999.

social milieu, for the Hammond Scribe also worked for John Wrythe, Arnold's brother-in-law.²⁴

Of the set, Cook's volume of law and history texts most resembles Arnold's Book. Instead of a chronicle, Cook's set includes short historical texts such as a brief description of the founding of London and St. Peter's, Cornhill together with a legal dictionary of Old English terms. Cook's book includes the English charter of London liberties from Richard II's reign also featured in Arnold's Book. As does Arnold's Book, Cook's book includes a collection of the ancient confirmations and grants of London liberties and lists of the customs due on a range of goods. The Hammond Scribe also assembled a formulary not unlike Arnold's, though these documents are not usually associated with Cook's own life; unlike Arnold's, Cook's formulary may have been copied from an exemplar.²⁵ At the same time, Cook's volume includes texts Arnold's Book does not, such as an English *Ordo coronationis*, and an English translation of Nicholas Oresme's *De moneta*.²⁶

Copied in the decades immediately following Cook's volumes, Arnold's Book is a model of its kind. Like many of these compilers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Arnold prefaces his legal materials with a London chronicle and moves quickly on to legal materials. Having provided a historical setting for his miscellany, Arnold follows the chronicle with an undated English charter of the liberties of London, set forth like abbreviated statutes or annotated tables of contents by chapter.²⁷ This is followed by legal documents providing historical context: London's charter granted by Henry I is here together with Edward the Confessor's granting of the Husting court and William the Conqueror's confirmation of the rights granted by Edward.²⁸ Each of these short texts was important to Horn, Carpenter, and other early London compilers.²⁹ Unlike most of Arnold's Book, each of these early texts is in Latin. Such short texts are followed by Richard II's confirmation of London's liberties dated 1383: this is in English.³⁰

24. Mooney, "A New Manuscript," p. 116.

25. For the list of documents, see Linne Mooney, *Index of Middle English Prose: Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Brewer, 1995), pp. 109–14.

26. In fact, many fifteenth-century household books include at least some of this type of historico-legal material: see, for example, London, British Library MSS Egerton 1995 and Harley 2252 (John Collins's Book); Oxford, Balliol College MS 354 (Richard Hill's Book). Lists of texts included in these volumes can be found in David R. Parker, *The Commonplace Book in Tudor London* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998).

27. Arnold, fols. 1–3v.

28. Ibid., fols. 3v–4r.

29. See Hanna, *London Literature*, especially p. 56.

30. Arnold, fols. 4v–15r.

The fact that Arnold had access to exemplars other than the “official” civic record reminds us of the popularity of civic legal miscellanies since Horn’s era. Uniquely, Arnold included William the Conqueror’s confirmation in an Old English version similar to that copied by Horn and kept in the Guildhall, as well as in a genuine Middle English translation unavailable in Horn’s compilations.³¹ Furthermore, Cook’s and Arnold’s copies of such documents were often drawn from different exemplars, serving as a further reminder that rather than copy directly from Guildhall documents, both men likely copied from exemplars owned by other guildsmen (or possibly heralds).³² Arnold’s translation of the Magna Carta and Charter of the Forest remains in no other miscellany of any sort extant today, and can be found in only one other Middle English copy.³³ His acquisition of these texts suggests that Arnold had access to otherwise unattested exemplars. Though national law, these foundational enactments also document early London liberties and therefore still fit into a civic legal miscellany.³⁴ The variety of exemplars used by Cook and Arnold reminds us that the Guildhall collections themselves were drawn from this same civic manuscript tradition that must originally have been much larger than extant copies suggest.

In Arnold’s Book, these seminal London legal texts are followed by a range of material culled from the official city compilations that was useful on a regular basis for London citizens; it is therefore not surprising to find such material in other civic legal miscellanies as well.³⁵ The city ordinances for the assize of bread are here, and so are weights and measures for woolens and wood.³⁶ Taxes on a wide range of goods are noted, all drawn from the city compila-

31. Henry Thomas Riley, ed. *Munimenta Guildhallae Londoniensis* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1859–60), vol. 2, pt. 1, pp. 25–26, 247; vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 504.

32. See Mooney’s notes in Mooney, *Index*, pp. 109–14. In explaining the similar set of documents but varied translation, it may be significant that the Hammond Scribe had connections with John Writhe’s predecessor Garter King of Arms, John Smert. See Linne Mooney, “Vernacular Literary Manuscripts and Their Scribes,” ed. Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin, *The Production of Books in England 1350–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 192–211, p. 207.

33. This is a unique copy of the Old Statutes translated into Middle English, dating to about 1300. See Claire Fennell, *A Middle English Statute-Book Part I. Statuta Antiqua Edited from Oxford, Bodleian MS Rawlinson B 520* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2011), for an edition of this translation. Arnold’s version is not in contemporary English, but is in a later Middle English than that of Rawlinson B. 520. Of note is that both Arnold and the Rawlinson manuscript show the 1297 reissue, rather than the usual 1225 issue.

34. Arnold, fols. 79v–84v.

35. See Riley, *Munimenta*, vol. 1 generally, and for specific examples, Book III, Part I (city taxes and fees on goods), Book III, Part II (oaths).

36. Arnold, fols. 11v–18v (bread), 27v–28r (woolens), 34v (wood).

tions.³⁷ The tithes of parishes are recorded, as well as the bull by which the grants were made.³⁸ There is a sizable list of the oaths taken by various lesser city officials, from constable to brokers: such oaths can be found in a variety of miscellanies.³⁹ Also included is a range of ordinances for various commercial enterprises in which Arnold was engaged.⁴⁰ Such material was normal in this type of miscellany, since members of the commercial classes would use such laws to guide their actions on a daily basis.

This mass of material is followed by a collection of documents from Arnold's own business dealings that amounts to a formulary.⁴¹ Formularies collected "forms": "those instrumental devices, such as standard form writs, warrants, or wills, which fixed a word order that validated some specific human actions as lawful."⁴² Even in formularies collected and used by lawyers and clerks in the government bureaucracy, formularies emphasized actual examples, rather than fictional instances.⁴³ We see evidence of this in the Book, as Arnold collected samples of indentures, sales receipts, safe conducts, pardons, and arbitration awards, among other material. English legal writing was almost entirely formulaic, and so personal formularies served not only as proof of transactions, but also as examples of legal formula. In Arnold's Book almost without exception these documents are in English.

Once in print this material makes Arnold's Book the first formulary in English. Even if Arnold had collected these documents simply to record them, later audiences could make use of this material for its generic potential, as Cook did with his secondhand formulary. As document production of all sorts was taught almost strictly based on following models, formularies were of crucial importance in preparation for medieval professional life.⁴⁴ The events of Arnold's life recorded in this material are sometimes sensational, and this colorfulness makes the legal forms preserving these life

37. For example see *ibid.*, fols. 34v–35r.

38. *Ibid.*, fols. 18v–25v includes the complete set of documents.

39. *Ibid.*, fols. 33r–34v. See for example London, British Library MSS Additional 37791, Lansdowne 762; and Gough London 10.

40. Trade laws can be found in London, British Library MSS Additional 38131, Additional 37791, Egerton 2885; Gough London 10, among others.

41. This formulary is followed by the balance of recipes and other, nonlegal materials, though legal material continues to be interspersed throughout. A number of the people who figure prominently in documents in Arnold's Book are connected to him as well in legal documents preserved in the National Archives.

42. DeLloyd J. Guth, "Introduction: Formulary and Literacy as Keys to Unlocking Late-Medieval Law," in Kouky Fianu and DeLloyd Guth, eds., *Écrit et Pouvoir dans les chancelleries médiévales: Espaces français, Espace anglais* (Brepols: Turnhout, 1997), 1–12, p. 2.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.

44. For the use of Chancery formularies in teaching, see *ibid.*

events memorable. Memorability made these legal forms especially useful for the mass audience of the printed editions. With a good formulary one could assess the accuracy of an indenture or sales receipt, and ensure that one replicated legal formula correctly oneself. The formulary Thomas Hoccleve produced for use in the Privy Seal is a testament to the contemporary value of formularies in bureaucratic settings, but the manuscript record shows them to have been an important element in civic legal miscellanies also.⁴⁵

We cannot know whether all of this material was translated in Arnold's exemplars, or even in Arnold's own manuscript copy, but I think it is likely. Some texts are printed in Latin with English translation following (such as the liberties granted by William the Conqueror noted above), suggesting that items were printed as they were found. Some of these texts would have been composed in English by this point of the century. However, some documents would have been drafted originally in French or Latin (and likely Dutch and Spanish), and these would have presented a complication to printing, if each had to be translated at that time.⁴⁶ This overwhelming Englishness must have been a choice on Arnold's part, and attests to the increasingly standard use of English. Arnold's altercation in Berghen op Zoom with a Lombard suggests he would have had some familiarity with other vernaculars or Latin; one wonders in what language he said "if it were not for Englishmen the Lombards would have nothing to eat but salad and cheese."⁴⁷ Yet, there is only a bit of Latin in an otherwise English volume. Documents that Arnold would have had to keep with him in their original languages, such as pardons and safe conducts, appear on the page of his Book in English.

Though we cannot know why or how Arnold's own manuscript came to this fate, Arnold's Book happened to be the version of this popular form of manuscript miscellany that ended up in print. The impetus for the first printed edition may well have been as political as it was practical. It is well known that London faced forced loans throughout Henry VII's reign and negotiated for over two years before extracting a confirmation of its charter from him in 1504.⁴⁸ This would place the beginnings of the city's formal negotiations in 1502, the posited year of the first printing of Arnold's Book. This trove of English evidence of London's liberties, together with the English Magna Carta

45. On Hoccleve's *Formulary*, see especially Ethan Knapp, "Bureaucratic Identity and the Construction of the Self in Hoccleve's *Formulary* and *La mal regle*," *Speculum* 74 (1999): 357–76, pp. 365–71.

46. The formal statement concerning Arnold's incarceration as a spy and release (fols. 88r–89r) and the document about his son Thomas's olive oil deal in San Lúcar de Barameda (fol. 88v) are both notarial and would not have been in English originally.

47. Arnold, fols. 88r–v.

48. Sean Cunningham, *Henry VII* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 241.

and Charter of the Forest found uniquely in Arnold's Book, may have made its publication very timely indeed.

Indeed, it seems likely that the first edition was printed at the request of members of London's governing elite. Dated to about 1502 based on the chronicle's final entry, Arnold's Book was one of the Antwerp printer Adriaen van Berghen's earliest editions, and it was one of only a few editions van Berghen printed for the lucrative English market.⁴⁹ Financing for editions was often split between the printer and a second or even third party; therefore, it seems likely that the exemplar and most of the funding must have been provided by some of the English Nation then resident in Antwerp, at least one of whom had ties with Richard Arnold.⁵⁰ In Antwerp, the city had granted English merchants a franchise and allowed them to settle at a Bullincstraat house just across the Groenplaats from the streets where the printers had their shops.⁵¹ Commerce between the two must have been frequent.

Two decades later, sustained interest in English law and the persistent absence of translations of it in print, despite an obvious market, may account for Arnold's Book's second edition, produced in the 1520s by the London printer Peter Treveris.⁵² Unlike so many London printers of his day, Treveris took few chances, and his catalog is marked by the presence of predictable sellers such as Latin grammars.⁵³ If he brought out another edition of Arnold's

49. Van Berghen's press was active for just over forty years, from 1500 until his execution in 1541. Andrew G. Johnston and Jean-François Gilmont, "L'imprimerie et la Réforme à Anvers," in *La réforme et le livre*, ed. Jean-François Gilmont (Paris: Cerf, 1990), 191–216, p. 200. See "Adriaen van Berghen," in Wouter Nijhoff and M. E. Kronenberg, eds. *Nederlandsche Bibliographie van 1500 tot 1540*, vol. 1 ('s Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1923), pp. 794–95. While the *Nederlandsche Bibliographie* does not include it, the STC lists an edition of Holte's *Lac puerorum* by van Berghen (STC 13606), and Duff also claims that van Berghen printed an almanac for the English market that I have not been able to trace. Edward Gordon Duff, *The Printers, Stationers, and Bookbinders of Westminster and London from 1475 to 1535* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906; reprint 1971), p. 216.

50. The ownership of the resulting copies is suggestive: see Andrew Hope, "On the Smuggling of Prohibited Books from Antwerp to England in the 1520s and 1530s," in *Tyndale's Testament*, ed. Paul Arblaster, Gergely Juhász, and Guido Latré (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 35–38, p. 35.

51. Paul Arblaster estimates that at any one time in Antwerp only about a hundred Englishmen reside; the numbers inflated significantly for the two annual fairs, at which he suggests 300 to 600 English might be present. For these statistics and information about the English House, see Paul Arblaster, "Domein de Waghemaker?, Front Elevation of the English House," in *Tyndale's Testament*, ed. Paul Arblaster, Gergely Juhász, and Guido Latré (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), pp. 80–81.

52. STC 783. *In this boke is contened ye names of the baylyfs custose mayers and sherefs of ye cyte of london* [Southwerk: Peter Treveris, 1525?]. Various library catalogs give this date as 1527; however, I think that date is likely too late.

53. Treveris selected a large set of capitals for this edition that mimic the style of fine

Book, then he had reason to think it would sell. Consonant with other entries in Treveris's catalog, this London edition appears to have sold well, and it attracted the attention of at least one printer, and I think two others.

The texts in Arnold's Book were evidently desirable in part as well as whole: beginning probably in the mid-1520s, the English printer Robert Wyer mined Arnold's Book for material. Treveris's recent edition would have made copies of the whole book widely available, and its contents became tantalizingly simple for such an enterprising printer to harvest. Wyer was a noted pamphlet-printer, active from the 1520s into the 1550s, and Arnold's Book was a source for him throughout this period. N. F. Blake claimed that Wyer "was not averse to cutting up longer books into smaller editions and changing the titles to make them more attractive and more saleable to a wide range of people."⁵⁴ Certainly, a miscellany such as Arnold's provided much material for anyone willing to "[cut] it up," and Wyer did.⁵⁵ By the 1520s it was becoming clear to printers that the law was big business, especially the statutes in English. In 1519 the innovating lawyer and printer John Rastell had translated and printed an abridgment of the old statutes. By 1530 this alphabetized abridgment had run through several editions in just over ten years, and it ultimately sold through eight editions in thirty years.⁵⁶ Although Rastell's abridg-

manuscript initials popular a hundred years earlier. While I have not found this set elsewhere, another set of initials he used in STC 783 that mimic the type of Dutch-style ink initials used in manuscripts turns up also in STC 13440. Other initials Treveris uses in STC 783 can also be found in other volumes with his colophon or printer's mark.

54. "Wyer, Robert (fl. 1524–1556)," by N. F. Blake, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30124> (accessed January 20, 2013).

55. "The nombre of perish churches" (fols. 52r–v) and "The cople of acarete cumpasyng the circuet of the wolde" (fols. 52v–54v) from Arnold's Book appear in STC 9984, 9984.5, and the second in STC 17297. Also in the late 1520s, Wyer excerpted Arnold's text on grafting fruit trees; this was a combination of two popular horticultural texts, by Geoffrey "of Franconia" and Nicholas Bollard. Heather Collier, "Richard Hill—A London Compiler," ed. Evelyn Mullally and John Thompson, *The Court and Cultural Diversity* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Brewer, 1995), 319–29, pp. 326–27; and W. L. Braekman, "Bollard's Middle English Book of Planting and Grafting and Its Background," *Studia Neophilologica* 57 (1985): 19–39. The edition I attribute to Wyer here is attributed provisionally to Wynkyn de Worde by the STC (STC 5953); however, Wyer made use of some of de Worde's materials, and the type and initial woodcuts appear to be the same as those used in an undoubted Wyer imprint of around 1530 (more likely 1527), STC 20480. This text was printed again in the 1560s by Robert Copland (STC 5954), and came to be attached to Thomas Hill's popular gardening treatise whereby it remained in print until 1608: STC 13492, 13494, 13495, 13496, and 13497. STC 20480 and 9984 bear the royal arms with pomegranate device discussed below.

56. STC 9515.5, 9518 (John Rastell); STC 9521 (William Rastell); STC 9519, 9521a.5, 9522 (Redman); STC 9523 (Petyt and Middleton); STC 9525–26 (Sears, Gaultier, and Powell). Cowley notes that STC 9521 is in types only used by William Rastell; however, as Redman printed the *Abridgment* both before and after William, and as we know that William printed another law book for Redman in 1531, I think it safe to claim that he was printing for Redman here as well. John

ment became a veritable hit, a complete translation of the medieval statutes was not immediately forthcoming.

Though Wyer reprinted nonlegal as well as legal material from Arnold's Book, one of these legal texts was reprinted until 1580, arguing for its marketability and popularity. Probably between 1525 and 1527, Richard Bankes, or more likely Wyer for Bankes, printed London ordinances in English for bread and wood that are identical to those in Arnold's Book.⁵⁷ While it is not impossible that Wyer used official copies for this material, Wyer's recent interest in Arnold's Book suggests that this was his source.⁵⁸ The pamphlet is little more than these London ordinances with the addition of the Assize of Bread and the "Statute of Winchester" (a popular version of the Assize of Bread).⁵⁹ The title page asserts that the pamphlet was commissioned by London Aldermen Michael Englysshe and John Rudstone. The lack of addition to Rudstone's name dates the volume to the 1520s, before Rudstone was knighted, in 1529.⁶⁰

The woodcuts in this pamphlet are otherwise unknown in a printed English law book and must have positively influenced its sales. The images of the sack of grain and variously sized and shaped loaves are derived from the manuscript tradition of the Assize of Bread and "Statute of Winchester," itself unique.⁶¹ Entirely new is the series of four woodcuts depicting baking and assaying bread decorating this pamphlet and its subsequent editions. The woodcuts together with the accessible translations appear to have been an exceptionally successful marketing strategy, and this pamphlet remained in

D. Cowley, *A Bibliography of Abridgements, Digests, Dictionaries, and Indexes of English Law to the Year 1800* (London: Quaritch, 1932), pp. xxiv–v. Cowley considers STC 9519 to be a different text, but even he admits it is nearly identical to Rastell's, and given the evident cooperation of William Rastell in subsequent years, I think we can consider this, as the STC does, one of the same series of editions. Cowley, p. xxvi.

57. This is about the same time Wyer first printed the geographical and horticultural excerpts of Arnold's Book.

58. STC 864. *Here begynnethe the boke named the assyse of bread what it ought to waye after the pryce of a quarter of wheete* ([London]: Richard Bankes [not after 1532]). Plomber reminds us that Wyer printed for Bankes. The likely printing dates can be narrowed to 1524–29. Wyer's subsequent history printing this pamphlet suggests that he may have printed this first edition too, as does the fact that Bankes had many books after 1528 that bear his name. Henry Plomber, *Robert Wyer: A Printer and Bookseller* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1897), p. 6. Blake, "Wyer." Peter W. M. Blayney, *The Stationer's Company before the Charter, 1403–1557* (London: The Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspapermakers, 2003), p. 36.

59. I discuss this pseudostatute in a forthcoming publication: *Medieval Hackers* (New York: Punctum, 2014).

60. This commission is referenced on the title page. For the date of Rudstone's knighting, see Beaven, *Aldermen*, 2:20–47.

61. Statute collections in England were often illuminated, but never illustrated with anything other than a historiation of a king in judgment at regnal openings; for discussion of the iconography developed for the "Statue of Winchester," see *Medieval Hackers*.

print until 1580.⁶² By certain measures, this was popular law. Even decorated with woodcuts, one cannot imagine this pamphlet to have been viewed as entertaining, yet its extended print history meant that it sold well for nearly a hundred years. Here, we have strong evidence that sixteenth-century and late-medieval audiences viewed “sentence” as being so valuable as to make it mainstream.

About the same time as he first printed the bread laws, Wyer excerpted other parts of Arnold’s Book for another pamphlet containing the Magna Carta and the Charter of the Forest alone. We know Wyer took these translations from Arnold’s Book because usually printed copies of the Magna Carta were made from a version released in 1300, where Wyer’s and Arnold’s copies were translated from the 1297 confirmation.⁶³ This tiny gem displays an eye-catching woodcut title page of the royal arms that dates the printing to between 1525 and 1531 (even more likely between 1525 and 1527).⁶⁴ Despite its small size, the volume illustrates classic statute book layout; in a small booklet, it includes the text in translation, followed by a table of the chapter titles as had been customary in statute collections for over a hundred years. This degree of care in layout and the evident high-quality printing renders it a highly readable little volume of the foundational texts of English law. In every sense, in the Magna Carta volume, as in its companion volume of bread laws, Wyer was making law texts available to a wider public untrained in the learned vernacular of law French, but thirsty for access to foundational law.

As far as we know, Wyer printed the Magna Carta pamphlet just once; however, I think that together Rastell’s abridgment and Wyer’s law pamphlets making use of Arnold’s Book may have attracted the attention of the notoriously acquisitive law printer Robert Redman. One supposes Wyer would

62. STC 866 (Robert Wyer, 1544?), STC 867 (Wyer, 1546?), STC 868.2 (Wyer, 1553?), STC 868.4 (Wyer, 1555?), STC 868.6 (Colwell/Wyer, ca. 1560), STC 868.8 (Colwell, 1570), STC 869.5 (Jackson, 1580), STC 869 (Jackson, 1580). These woodcuts would have had to be recut during this extended life span; however, I have not been able to examine enough copies to make an argument about the rate at which the woodcuts wore and when they were recut.

63. See note for STC 9270.5 in ESTC.

64. Though originally a woodcut used by John Siberch in Cambridge, it was used subsequently for several years in Antwerp, likely transferred through Siberch’s colleague Peter Kaetz. The last use of the woodcut I have found in Antwerp is a 1525 Dutch Bible printed by Hans van Ruremund, who printed for Kaetz: *Hier beghint die Bibel int duitsche neerstelick overgheset* (Antwerp: Hans van Ruremund, 1525). It would have been impossible to use Catherine’s pomegranate device, as this woodcut does, after 1531 when she was sent away from court, if not after 1527 when the Great Matter was begun. For the relationship between Siberch and Kaetz, see John D. Fudge, *Commerce and Print in the Early Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 162–63. This woodcut appears in STC 20480 and 9984, and so it seems likely that the entire set of first edition pamphlets drawn from Arnold’s Book postdate Ruremund’s Bible and predate the Great Matter.

have reissued the Magna Carta, as he did the bread laws and other popular pamphlets making use of Arnold's Book, had not Redman hired a translator to produce a complete translation of the old statutes in the early 1530s, which he titled *The Boke of the Magna Carta*.⁶⁵ While Redman could hardly copy the diminutive size of Wyer's pamphlet, he brought out the *Boke* in octavo, ensuring that it would be as handy and affordable as possible.⁶⁶ I do not think we should consider this simply a timely coincidence. Redman had been dubbed "Rudeman" for stealing materials from other printers, even assuming their identities.⁶⁷ In just one example of this behavior, Redman took over Rastell's abridgment and printed it for a decade. Needless to say, there was little motivation for Redman's behavior other than profit.

In Arnold's Book, we see a superb example of a characteristic medieval textual form, the household book, make the transition into popular print. At the heart of its popularity were its vernacular legal contents. It is precisely the legal materials found in Arnold's Book that explode in popularity in the 1540s, after Redman's death. Nearly every legal element present in Arnold's Book can be found in multiple editions after that date. From the 1530s onward, the old statutes were printed regularly. Only a handful of formularies in English were printed before 1546, but they continued to be printed every few years after that.⁶⁸ Decrees for tithes remain from 1546.⁶⁹ Laws for London markets were printed as of 1562.⁷⁰ It is entirely likely that earlier editions were produced that are no longer extant, but the very number remaining from the 1540s suggests that the market launched during this decade. Arnold's Book stands at the very beginning of this process, and facilitated the development of this popular publishing trend until the professional law printers like Redman took over.

65. STC 9272. *The boke of Magna Carta, with diuers other statutes, whose names appere in the nexte lefe folowyng, translated into Englyshe* (London: Robert Redman, 1534). This was followed by two further editions in less than ten years: STC 9275, 9276.

66. This contrasts with his imprint of the *New Statutes in English*, which he published in a large folio, and which sold only two editions in ten years: STC 9286, 9287.

67. STC 15726, fol. Y8r, where rival Richard Pynson says about Redman: "quam elapsus est e manibus Rob. Redman, sed verius Rudeman, quia inter mille homines rudiorum haud facile inuenies."

68. See, for example, STC 14124, 3327, and 15587.5 (*Carta Feodi*). I do not include Fitzherbert's *Boke of the Justice* due to its professional character.

69. See, for example, STC 16700.

70. See, for example, STC 16704.6.

Tourists and *Tabulae* in Late-Medieval England

MICHAEL VAN DUSSEN

In Chaucer's *House of Fame*, shortly after the Dreamer falls asleep and finds himself in a temple of glass, he describes the following scene:

But as I romed up and doun,
I fond that on a wall ther was
Thus writen on a table of bras:
“I wol now singen, yif I kan,
The armes, and also the man
That first cam, thurgh his destinee,
Fugityf of Troy contree,
In Itayle, with ful moche pyne
Unto the strondes of Lavyne.”¹

Two notes on this passage: first, the reference to a “table of bras,” or at least a “table” bearing text, reflects a familiar textual form in Chaucer's England. A “table” (*tabula*) was a surface made of alloy, stone, or wood that was affixed to a wall, pillar, or monument; its purpose typically was to display text that provided information about a structure or institution, propaganda, indulgences, or a commemorative message. In the case of stone or metal *tabulae*, the text was engraved, whereas wooden tables had parchment leaves pasted to them on which text was inscribed with ink. Second, tables frequently did

1. *The House of Fame* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), lines 139–47.

contain the kind of information that Chaucer records in *The House of Fame*—foundation legends and histories, in this case, from Virgil, but elsewhere, in known examples of *tabulae*, information about Joseph of Arimathea, Brutus, and King Arthur. It was common, in other words, to find if not the matter of Rome, then certainly the matter of Britain on medieval English tables. And as I show in greater detail below, even very lengthy texts (if not quite the length of the *Aeneid*) could be found on *tabulae*.

But if we attend more specifically to the two lines *preceding* the reference to “a table of bras” in Chaucer’s text, we find something that is much less common in extant writings that record the contents of *tabulae*: the circumstances of their presentation and reception, and a straightforward indication that the information recorded originated with a *tabula* in the first place. “But as I romed up and down, / I fond that on a wall ther was . . .” What Chaucer gives us is a literary meditation on the relationship between publicly displayed written record and lived experience of architectural space at the end of the fourteenth century. In this essay I take my cue from Chaucer’s reference, together with a number of late-medieval and early-modern records, arguing that *tabulae* acted more often than we may realize as mediators between the direct interaction with place and its subsequent reporting, and that the tabular medium facilitated its own elision—its nonreporting—in derived narrative accounts. The *tabula* genre facilitates its own redeployment by a literate public, its narratives taking on new oral and textual forms even as these forms are grounded in traditional sources of authority—clerical, architectural, and material.

The circumstances of encountering the tabular text in *The House of Fame* are easy to pass by. Indeed, without explicit contextual information of the kind that Chaucer provides, we may not always be able to recover whether a particular textual reference originally came from a *tabula* in the first place. Even when we do have evidence of a tabular text, further, it is not always a simple task to determine what it was made of. Wooden *tabulae* (the main focus of this essay) could contain lengthier, more elaborate texts than tables made of metal or stone (also called “*tabulae*”), but not all records are specific about the material medium of the *tabula* they describe or the length of the text involved. In Dugdale’s *The History of Saint Paul’s Cathedral in London*,² for example, we find references to what Dugdale terms “*tabulae*,” most of them on or surrounding tombs and, judging by Dugdale’s engravings, made of stone. Some of his references, however, are less certain, for example,

2. Here referring to the continuation by Henry Ellis: *The History of Saint Paul’s Cathedral in London, From Its Foundation, by Sir William Dugdale, Knight . . . with A Continuation and Additions . . . by Henry Ellis* (London: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mayor, and Jones, 1818).

the lengthy text “super Tabulam pensilem [on a hanging tablet]” next to the tomb of John King, Bishop of London (d. 1621), which is far longer than most engraved inscriptions.³ More helpful is the description of the text “super Tabulam ligneam [on a wooden tablet]” that hung next to the tomb of Eustache of Fauconbrigg (d. 1228, though the tabula was almost certainly more recent).⁴ Another inscription is said to have been found written “super Tabulam marmoream.”⁵ Still other tabulae that were likely made of wood are not designated as such, for example, the partial transcriptions of two tabulae, discussed below, relating the history of St. Paul’s.⁶ And indeed, surviving physical evidence that would help us to corroborate the sparse descriptions of men like Dugdale is scarce: most narrative tables—far from having been engraved in stone or brass, but typically inscribed on parchment pasted onto large wooden panels—have either decayed, gone missing, or been destroyed.⁷ Sometimes the only way we can learn that tabulae existed at all is through antiquarian epitomes, rather than full transcripts of their contents, or in itemized catalogs of antiquities that inventory them alongside other objects of note in a particular church. And while at least one medieval wooden tabula⁸ has been characterized as a “permanent reference collection, to be consulted on site only,”⁹ we mostly know of tabulae from words written off-site. Occasionally, though, it is possible to tell that what appears to be a firsthand account has in fact been transcribed from a tabula, and I suspect that a great many more details than we realize in travel writings and chronicles are received narratives of a kind that were copied from more or less ephemeral textual forms that no longer survive.

3. Ibid., p. 51.

4. Ibid., p. 55.

5. Ibid., p. 59.

6. Ibid., pp. 61–62.

7. It is not the purpose of this essay to create a taxonomy of tabular materials, but rather to study the afterlife of tabular texts in subsequent narratives. It should be borne in mind that “tabula” is a relatively general category, and seems to have become something of a portmanteau descriptor by the seventeenth century. For discussion of brasses, see Malcolm Norris, *Monumental Brasses: The Craft* (London: Faber, 1978); and Sally Bahdam and Martin Stuchfield, *Monumental Brasses* (Oxford: Shire, 2009). For monuments and inscriptions more generally, see Nigel Saul, *English Church Monuments in the Middle Ages: History and Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

8. Discussed in detail below. Three medieval wooden tables from England have received exclusive attention, but others certainly survive, though they have not been studied systematically. For example, Ralph Hanna informs me of a tabula in the almshouses at Long Alley in Abingdon (erected 1446), apparently medieval.

9. Jeanne Krochalis, “Magna Tabula: The Glastonbury Tablets,” in *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition*, ed. James P. Carley (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001), p. 442.

To be sure, we have other kinds of evidence that medieval experiences of structures and even cities could be highly mediated and then stereotyped, and that medieval accounts of such interactions represent a middle ground between direct and derived experience. When Margery Kempe travels to the Holy Land, for example, she casts her pilgrimage as a supremely personal encounter. And while we must not rule out the possibility that personalized experience can develop in the context of a guided tour, what we may not realize is that Margery's account follows, almost precisely, the sequence prescribed in the Franciscan and other guides to the Holy Land, itineraries that Franciscans themselves facilitated in their roles as guides *in situ*.¹⁰ Some of the most interesting recent scholarship on *The Book of John Mandeville*, too, has centered on its author's heavy (and nearly exclusive) reliance on a well-stocked library—armchair tourism cast as the fruit of personal experience of the world's wonders.¹¹ Further, Petrarch is said to have refused an invitation to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, choosing instead to write a bookish itinerary of his own and to give it to those who were to travel on without him: "we sometimes know many things that we have never seen," explains Petrarch, "and many things that we have seen we do not know."¹² Textual authority and lived experience made surprisingly harmonious bedfellows in the Middle Ages.

Of significant interest in coming to a fuller understanding of the use and prevalence of *tabulae* in particular, however, is the degree to which a number of locations in England (and on the Continent) were made legible by the tablets displayed within them; the way in which these places spoke for themselves, as it were, mediating lived experience through documentary prompting and display. As the picture of this relatively unstudied textual form

10. For one such guide, see *The Stations of Jerusalem*, in *Codex Ashmole 61: A Compilation of Popular Middle English Verse*, ed. George Shuffelton (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2008), pp. 330–48. See also Sanford B. Meech and Hope Emily Allen, eds., *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Early English Text Society, o.s., 212 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), 73/28–31; Josephie Brefeld, *A Guidebook for the Jerusalem Pilgrimage in the Late Middle Ages: A Case for Computer-Aided Textual Criticism* (Hilversum, Netherlands: Verloren, 1994); and the *Encyclopedia of Medieval Pilgrimage*, ed. Larissa J. Taylor et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), s.v. "guidebooks."

11. See the introduction to Iain Macleod Higgins's *Writing East: The "Travels" of Sir John Mandeville* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 1–27. See also Tamarah Kohanski, "'What is a "travel book," anyway?' Generic Criticism and *Mandeville's Travels*," *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 7 (1996): 117–30.

12. Theodore J. Cachey Jr., *Petrarch's Guide to the Holy Land: Facsimile Edition of Cremona, Biblioteca Statale, Deposito Libreria Civica, manuscript BB.1.2.5* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), fol. 3r.

takes on greater definition,¹³ the architectural landscape of medieval England becomes increasingly interactive, giving rise to a narrative topography that forms an integral part of what has become a fascination with local histories and the historiography of place.¹⁴

But to return to Chaucer's reference by way of providing some additional background. Not only was the tabula a familiar textual form in Chaucer's England; it was in Chaucer's time, and continuing into the following century, that the tabula first *became* a widespread textual form. Three surviving English wooden tabulae from the medieval period have exclusively received scholarly attention: two in York Minster, and one from Glastonbury Abbey, now held at the Bodleian.¹⁵ All three were produced in the last two decades of the fourteenth century or in the early years of the fifteenth. There are other recorded examples of English tabulae that no longer survive, once displayed, for example, at the cathedrals of Durham, Lichfield, Lincoln, Ripon, and Winchester, some of them still on site in the late seventeenth century, when James Ussher described them in his *Britannicarum ecclesiarum antiquitates* (1687).¹⁶ Still others could once be found in the Church of St. Peter upon Cornhill and at St. Paul's, London, a site to which I will return in a moment.¹⁷ Their dates,

13. Studies of and significant references to tabulae in England include Jeanne Krochalis, "Magna Tabula"; G. H. Gerould, "The Legend of St. Wulfhad and St. Ruffin at Stone Priory," *PMLA* 32 (1917): 323–37; Gerould, "'Tables' in Medieval Churches," *Speculum* 1 (1926): 439–40; N. Denholm-Young, "The Birth of a Chronicle," *Bodleian Quarterly Record* 7 (1933): 325–28; W. A. Pantin, "Some Medieval English Treatises on the Origin of Monasticism," in *Medieval Studies Presented to Rose Graham*, ed. Veronica Ruffer and A. J. Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 200–201, 207–8; J. S. Purvis, "The Tables of the York Vicars Choral," *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 41 (1966): 741–48; *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, vol. 4, Paisley-York, ed. N. R. Ker and A. J. Piper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 824–25; Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, vol. 2, c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 495; and Gransden, *Legends, Traditions, and History in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon, 1992), pp. 331–32.

14. For England, the bulk of scholarship on locality centers on the social history of London. On medieval London, see, for example, Barbara Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Caroline Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and C. Paul Christianson, "Evidence for the Study of London's Late Medieval Manuscript-Book Trade," in Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall, eds., *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375–1475* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 87–108.

15. The Glastonbury tables are edited in Krochalis, "Magna Tabula," pp. 464–525; an edition of the York Minster tabulae can be found in James Raine, *The Historians of the Church of York and Its Archbishops*, vol. 2 (London, 1886), pp. 446–87.

16. James Ussher, *Britannicarum ecclesiarum antiquitates* (London, 1687; Wing U160), pp. 36, 73.

17. Ibid. Most records of tabulae pertain to those that were situated in churches, but tabulae could be found elsewhere. For example, Edward III requested in 1354 that the name of

from what can be discerned, span the late fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. William Worcestre also records several in his *Itineraries*, most if not all of which were probably wooden.¹⁸

Tables could serve many descriptive or directive purposes. The extant examples from York and Glastonbury provide universal and institutional histories—details about miracles associated with the site, saints, privileges, foundations. The most famous example, the *Magna Tabula Glastoniensis*, exploits the attractive legends of King Arthur, drawing primarily from the chronicles of William of Malmesbury and John of Glastonbury. We are told briefly of the coming of Joseph of Arimathea to Britain, of the deeds of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, and of a number of saints—including Patrick, Bridgid, and David—who all bear witness to Glastonbury's antiquity, sanctity, and privileges. A short passage on Arthur also appears on the larger of the two York *tabulae* as part of its verse chronicle of the church and bishops of York.¹⁹ In other words, these tablets could serve as concise chronicles, distillations, as it were, of more expansive legendary histories. They could be politically motivated, as is the case with the Glastonbury *tabula*, and they could also advertise the fame and virtues of a pilgrimage shrine.

Robert de Thame be removed from a tablet in the London Guildhall. Robert had been charged with an unspecified offense, and apparently a table in the Guildhall was reserved for the public display of offenders' names. The request claims that "Robert de Thame, citizen and mercer of our said city, has shown unto us, that whereas the said Robert and other four of his fellows were lately impeached in our said city for a certain offence imputed to them, and the said Robert was punished for the same offence by fine and imprisonment of his body, and in other manner, so far as the law allowed; nevertheless, over and above the punishment aforesaid, you have caused the name of the said Robert to be hung up in your Guildhall, upon a tablet there, together with the names of his four fellows aforesaid; to the everlasting scandal and undoing of his estate, and otherwise than has been done or accustomed heretofore in such a case; as to the which he has entreated of us, as a work of charity, our aid and redress." The text is printed in Henry Thomas Riley, ed., *Memorials of London and London Life in the XIIIth, XIVth, and XVth Centuries* (London, 1868), pp. 274–75. I thank Barbara Hanawalt for directing my attention to this reference.

18. See *Itineraries*, ed. John H. Harvey (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), pp. 105 (Penryn College), 113 (the church at Tavistock), 271 (the Charterhouse at Kingston Sheen), and 313 (the Temple Church at Bristol). Worcestre's description of what he found at the Sheen Charterhouse is especially remarkable: "Memorandum that on the walls on each side of the nave of the church hang many devotions and good reminders to devotion and the arousing of all Christian souls to God, both smaller and larger tables written in a good text hand and in bastard letter to the number of about 34, nor have I seen in any other monastic church even the twentieth part of these tables so fully written." John Leland also mentions many tables in his *Itinerary*, though seldom does he present conclusive evidence that any of them were wooden. It seems likely, however, that the "tabelles at Norwiche, Yarnemuth, and Linne, that testifie of great pestilence that hath bene yn those townes," were wooden. See *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the Years 1535–1543*, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith, 5 vols. (London: G Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1907–10), 4:122.

19. In Raine, *The Historians of the Church of York*, p. 450.

Others provided information about monuments within a church itself, including images and tombs. A familiar example comes from Caxton, who records text from a “table hongyng on a pylere” by Chaucer’s tomb at Westminster Abbey, which contained a verse epitaph by the poet Stephano Suri-gone.²⁰ One especially involved example of this type of table, from the Priory at Worksop Abbey, is recorded in Dugdale’s *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1655–73). Strikingly, it was written in twenty-nine rime-royal stanzas in Middle English, and encourages readers to confirm some of its descriptions by checking them against the monuments in the church, as in this section, depicting the tomb of Sir Thomas Neville:

Then [Neville was] tumulate here in Nottinghamshire,
 At Wyrksoppe, the north side of this mynster,
 With his helm on his hede will enquire
 With precious stones sometime, that were sett sere,
 And a noble charbuncle on him doth he bere.
 On his hede to see they may who so will
 Of my writing witness for to fulfill.²¹

Finally, one of the most common types of tabula contained indulgences or lists of indulgences associated with a specific shrine. The Glastonbury table, for example, lists on its final folio a remarkable eighty indulgences granted to the local bishops of Bath and Wells from all over Europe.²² More modest tabulae, found throughout Europe, could represent the terms of a particular indulgence itself, or, like the Glastonbury table, list several as their exclusive content. One survivor of this type is currently in the Rožmberk family collection in the Czech Republic, designed for the church at Kájov in southern Bohemia at the end of the fifteenth century.²³

So far I have discussed the forms and contents of known tabulae. But how did people interact with them? Such few studies of tabulae as there are

20. Discussed most fully in Joseph A. Dane, *Who Is Buried in Chaucer’s Tomb? Studies in the Reception of Chaucer’s Book* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), chap. 1, with the reference cited here on p. 12. For discussion of the materials from which the table may have been made (if it ever existed in the first place), see *ibid.*, p. 16. Dane seems not to have been aware of wooden tabulae that contained text written on parchment.

21. Quoted from the nineteenth-century edition: William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (London, 1830), vol. 6, pt. 1, p. 123.

22. Krochalis, “*Magna Tabula*,” 435. Krochalis edits the full text of the tabula, with the indulgences on pp. 522–25.

23. *The Rožmberks: A Short Exhibition Guide* (Česká Budějovice: Národní památkový ústav—územní odborné pracoviště v Českých Budějovicích, 2011), p. 62.

consistently suggest that these tables were likely set up for the use of visitors. Jeanne Krochalis, for example, writes of the Glastonbury tabula: “The fifteenth-century pilgrim who could read Latin by the candlelight available in the abbey would be thoroughly informed about what Glastonbury considered its authentic story and the spiritual benefits he or she could gain from being there.”²⁴ Yet no one, to my knowledge, seems to have found much evidence of how visitors used tabulae—whether those at Glastonbury or anywhere else.²⁵ Chaucer’s comments do not satisfactorily provide that kind of evidence, but they do at least intimate what a visitor might do with a “table”; how one might orient oneself in an architectural setting by means of textual displays presumably set up for the purpose.

There are, however, other sources of evidence for how visitors interacted with tabulae. Recently in Prague I found the itinerary of a Bohemian traveler who recorded details of his travels from Prague to London, and then further west in England. The itinerary appears interspersed throughout the final gathering of Prague, *Knihovna Metropolitní kapituly*, MS H.15. I have written about aspects of this itinerary elsewhere, mostly in connection with the eulogies of Queen Anne of Bohemia that the traveler transcribed from her tomb at Westminster Abbey.²⁶ But the itinerary also reveals some other fascinating details about the ways in which the traveler learned the information he chose to record.²⁷

On the surface the itinerary doesn’t look very fascinating at all. It mostly consists of dry factual descriptions: distances between cities, measurements of structures, brief lists of relics kept in particular shrines, with only occasional hints of local lore. Here is one example, taken from the traveler’s description of Westminster Hall:

Ibi etiam est unum pallacium, longitudo lx vi gladiatorum et latitudo xviii gladiatorum, et preparacio pallacii de lignis pulcra que nunquam est visatilis.

[There is also a palace that is 66 swords in length and 18 swords in breadth, and the preparation of the palace [is] from beams of matchless beauty.]

24. Krochalis, “*Magna Tabula*,” p. 435.

25. One exception, discussed in detail below, is the incorporation of a “*tabula pensilis* [hanging table]” into several related chronicles of the church at Durham. See Denholm-Young, “Birth of a Chronicle.”

26. *From England to Bohemia: Heresy and Communication in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 19–36 and Appendix A.

27. I am currently revising an edition of the entire itinerary for publication.

Length, breadth, materials used—these are characteristic of the account, and they remind one of the often detached and accumulative material descriptions that proliferate in *The Book of John Mandeville*. There is a sense that the traveler is collecting structures by measuring them and itemizing their features with the kind of uniform cadence of a meticulous cataloger. Here is another example, this time from the traveler's description of St. Paul's, London:

Ecclesia Sancti Pauli infra limites continet III arcas [*sic*] et dimidiam, rodam dimidiam, et sex virgas constratas. Longitudo eiusdem ecclesie dc et xc pedes, latitudo c et xxx pedes. Altitudo occidentalis testudinis continet ab arca [*sic*] C et ii pedes. Altitudo nove testudinis lxxx viii pedes. Campanilis altitudo cc et lx; altitudo lignorum cc lxx iiiii pedes.

[The Church of St. Paul contains within its limits three acres and a half of land, one rood and a half, and six covered perches. The length of this same church is 690 feet, and the breadth is 130 feet. The height of the western dome is from the altar 102 feet. The height of the new dome is 88 feet. The belfry is 260 feet in height, and the height of the wooden beams [of the belfry] is 274 feet.]

Descriptions like this one provide detailed information about structures that no longer survive, and some of them challenge what we read, for example, in Stow's *Survey of London*. Westminster Hall survives to this day, of course, but St. Paul's Cathedral as this traveler would have seen it was destroyed during the Great Fire of 1666. Yet more to the point here is the fact that the traveler's description of St. Paul's is almost identical to that found in London, British Library, MS Harley 565.²⁸ The relevant section reads as follows:²⁹

Ecclesia sancti Pauli London' continet infra limites suos tres acras terre et dimidiam, unam rodam et dimidiam et sex virgas constratas. Longitudo eiusdem ecclesie continet dclxxxx pedes. Latitudo eiusdem ecclesie continet cxxx pedes. Altitudo occidentalis testudinis continet ab ara cij pedes. Altitudo testudinis nove fabrice continent ab ara lxxxviiij pedes. Cumulus ecclesie continet in Altitudine cl pedes cum cruce. Altitudo fabrice lapidie

28. The text here, as well as additional texts discussed below, is edited by Edward Tyrrell in *A Chronicle of London from 1089 to 1483* (London, 1827), pp. 174–80, with translations on pp. 181–87. Dugdale also transcribed this tabula, together with fragments of another that was situated nearby (discussed below), in *The History of Saint Paul's Cathedral*, pp. 61–62.

29. Tyrrell, *Chronicle of London*, p. 174. The translation below is adapted from Tyrrell's, p. 181.

campanilis eiusdem ecclesie continet a plana terra cclx pedes. Altitudo fabrice lignee eiusdem campanilis continet cclxxiiij pedes.

[The Church of St. Paul, London, contains within its limits three acres and a half of land; one rood and a half, and six covered perches. The length of this same church is 690 feet. The breadth of the same church is 130 feet. The height of the western dome is from the altar 102 feet. The height of the dome of the new building is from the altar 88 feet. The edifice of the church is in height 150 feet with the cross. The height of the stonework of the belfry of the same church is, from the level ground, 260 feet. The height of the woodwork of the same belfry is 274 feet.]

The Harley description continues for some time, but the source of the two similar passages is revealed by the heading that precedes the Harleian account: “Copia Tabule Pendentis ad Columpnam iuxta Tumulum Ducis Lancaster’ in Ecclesia Sancti Pauli London” (A copy of a table hanging on a column next to the tomb of the Duke of Lancaster [i.e., John of Gaunt] in the Church of St. Paul in London). And sure enough, in the Bohemian traveler’s itinerary, a description of the Duke of Lancaster’s tomb immediately follows these general facts about the dimensions of the church.

It is impossible to tell whether the Bohemian traveler also transcribed his information about the Duke of Lancaster’s tomb directly from another tabula,³⁰ but there is evidence to suggest that in St. Paul’s, as elsewhere, visitors could be guided by a number of tabulae on display. The transcription of the table recording the dimensions of St. Paul’s in the Harleian manuscript is accompanied, for example, by two other transcriptions of tabulae, all of them once hanging on pillars that surrounded the choir of the church (they are all said to hang near tombs that, according to Stow’s and Dugdale’s sixteenth- and seventeenth-century descriptions, were situated around the choir).³¹ One of them hung between the tomb of the Duke of Lancaster and that of Roger, Bishop of London (d. 1241), and a second also hung by Roger’s tomb, on another pillar.³² The first of these records events of significance to the history

30. In fact, he provides very little description of the tomb at all, writing only “Et ibi est sepulcrum Sancti Pauli et sepultura valde pulcra Ducis Langastrie.” At a later date, at least, a tabular text did hang by the tomb of John of Gaunt. See Dugdale, *The History of Saint Paul’s Cathedral*, p. 60.

31. John Stow (*A Survey of London by John Stow*, ed. C. L. Kingsford, 2 vols. [Oxford, 1908], 1:336) attests that Gaunt’s tomb was located “on the north side the Quire, beside Blanch his first wife.” The placement of the monuments around the choir and elsewhere in the church is also indicated in part by the descriptions in Dugdale, *The History of Saint Paul’s Cathedral*.

32. The placement of the tabulae in relation to the tombs can be approximated by the ac-

of St. Paul's to the time of Richard II. We are familiar with medieval chronicles that record natural disasters and phenomena alongside political and other events, but this chronicle in tabular form takes almost exclusive delight in nature behaving badly—fires, plagues, violent winds, earthquakes; birds flying through the air with lighted coals in their beaks, setting fire to houses; fiery dragons and evil spirits seen casting about in the tempest—this is sensational historiography, not designed to make the place seem like a dull destination.³³

The next table, called a “magna tabula”—and it really must have been large to hold the substantial amount of text that was recorded—lists the major kings of England from its foundation to Henry VI, devoting special attention to the founding role of Brutus, and it even includes a verse dialogue between Brutus and the goddess Diana (derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britannie*), as well as a poetic address to visitors that introduces the dialogue:

Te quicumque leges, bene si vis noscere Reges
Anglos vel leges: hec iterando leges.

[Whoever you are who read this: if you wish to know well the English
kings or laws, read by perusing these [verses]].³⁴

Nor were tabulae always designed as solitary textual units; besides directing visitors to other monuments, or sections of a building, some of them seem to have been cross-referenced with other tabulae, allowing for an integrated experience—a kind of closed loop of interaction with an architectural space. Records of three tabulae once situated around the choir of the church at Stone Priory in Staffordshire show that these were indeed cross-referenced. One of the three (notably, in Middle English, and largely in verse) was situated on the left (or epistle) side of the choir and referred to names “writyn in a tabull on

counts in MS Harley 565 and Dugdale's *History of Saint Paul's Cathedral*. The first, described below, is introduced by the following heading in the Harleian MS: “Copia alterius tabule pendentis ad mediam columpnam. Ibidem inter dictum tumulum dicti ducis [i.e., John of Gaunt] et tumulum sancti Rogeri nuper episcopi London”; the second has the heading “Copia magne tabule ibidem pendentis per dictam tumbam dicti Rogeri nuper episcopi London” (see Tyrrell, *A Chronicle of London*, pp. 174, 176). Dugdale introduces the first with “Super Tabulam, ad columpnam juxta Tumulum Johannis De Gandavo, quondam Lancastriae Duce, pendentem”; and the second with “Exemplar Inscriptionis super Tabulam pendentem exaratae, ac ad mediam Columpnam ibidem, inter Tumulum dicti Ducis Lancastriae, et Tumulum Sancti Rogeri dudum Londoniensis Episcopi” (see *History of Saint Paul's*, pp. 61–62).

33. Text in Tyrrell, *A Chronicle of London*, pp. 174–75.

34. Ibid., p. 177 (translation adapted from ibid., p. 184).

the right side the queer.”³⁵ So, too, does the smaller of the two *tabulae* at York apparently refer to the author and content of its larger counterpart.³⁶

Returning to the Bohemian traveler’s account of his English itinerary, and bearing in mind what I have just outlined regarding the contents of *tabulae*, I suspect that a number of his references—and not just the one from St. Paul’s that I have been able to confirm—originated with tabular inscriptions. For one thing, his accounts of other structures emphasize the same kinds of detail, using similar modes of description and measurement. We also know that he copied other openly available texts on his trip—three verse eulogies of his countrywoman, Anne of Bohemia. We might risk extrapolating from these instances that he copied still others, perhaps from textual displays at Windsor Castle, for example, where he reports on events from Arthurian legend said to have been associated with that site:

5 milliaria a Londonia distat castrum Vinzur, in quo sunt de fraternitate Sancti Georgi xxiii; et quolibet anno faciunt solempniter missa et cetera officia; et dicitur quod ibi fuit Rex Artuss et quomodo alii, videlicet Percifal et ceteri fuerunt ibi, et quomodo prima vice perpetrando militarem statum venit a matre sua, et ibi occidit rubeum millitem.

[The castle Windsor stands five miles apart from London, in which reside 24 from the fraternity of St. George; and in any given year they solemnly perform a Mass and the other offices; and it is said that in that place was King Arthur as well as the others, namely, Percifal and the others [from the Round Table] were there, and how, at the first opportunity upon attaining the knightly status, [Percifal] came from his mother and killed the Red Knight there.]

I have already said that information about Arthur is known to have been included in the Glastonbury and York tables. But it is entirely possible, I think, that a number of sites in England similarly saw the benefit of proclaiming their associations with Arthur in tabular form as well—not least St. George’s Chapel at Windsor, the home of the recently formed chivalric Order of the

35. For discussion of the Stone Priory *tabulae*, see Gerould, “The Legend of St. Wulfhad and St. Ruffin at Stone Priory,” p. 324.

36. Raine, *Historians of the Church at York*, p. 464: “Reserante nobis in scriptis suis tabulatis quodam praedecessore nostro, Johanne de Alhalowgate, felicis antiquitatis memoriam ad posteritatis notitiam, de ordinatione et quorundam successione episcoporum Eboracensium [etc.]”

Garter, modeled after the Round Table.³⁷ We know of no surviving tabulae associated with Windsor Castle or St. George's Chapel, but Dugdale suggests in the *Monasticon* that several were once located in the chapel. One of them was situated above a small altar on the north side of the church, opposite the high altar, and contained the Passion of St. George (whether the depiction was textual or pictorial is unclear). Another clearly did contain images (of Mary and John at the Crucifixion), and although it is called a "tabula" it may have been what we would call a diptych or triptych, more along the lines of an altarpiece. A third, this one on the high altar, is also called a "tabula," but contains images as well as words. It seems safe to say that St. George's Chapel had tabulae, then, but Dugdale's descriptions blur the distinction between textual tables and other kinds of display, all of them with multiple "leaves" (*folia*).³⁸ While this is not the place to discuss other related types of display in detail, it should be noted in passing that hangings like the so-called arma Christi rolls—large parchment rolls that contained verses on the Passion together with graphic depictions of Christ's suffering—were sometimes available in churches to facilitate lay devotion.³⁹ The *mappaemundi*—wall hangings like the Hereford Map—were also available for public perusal, and constructed for display using the same kinds of materials as tabulae. (I am reminded here of the four silver tables depicting Britain that John Leland promised in his *New Year's Gift* to Henry VIII, but never delivered.)⁴⁰ Interactive and publicly available displays come in many more kinds than written narratives like the one Chaucer begins from in *The House of Fame*.

We have discussed in some detail the circumstances in which tables could be found. We have also begun to see how narrative tabulae mediated the experience of architectural space, and how subsequent narratives transformed, masked, or otherwise incorporated their tabular sources. One conclusion is that more texts may have been derived from tabulae than we are able to demonstrate, in part because tabular texts were sometimes transcribed

37. See, further, the discussion of Gawain's head and Caradocus's mantle at Dover Castle, below.

38. The descriptions in Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. 6, pt. 1, p. 364 are as follows: "Item una tabula nobilis, cum duobus foliis deauratis, et aymellatis, cum imagine crucifixi, Mariae, Johannis; et gesma cum pomellis . . . tamen in aymellatione deficit infra et extra aliquid." "Item una tabula semper stans super summum altare, cum duobus foliis argenteis deauratis, frettatis cum literis ex una parte, et uno crucifix pertractato in alio folio ejusdem." "Item una tabula lignea stans super parvum altare in parte boreali, ex opposite summon altari, cum platis et imaginibus cupreis deauratis, continens passionem S. Georgii."

39. For discussion, see Rossell Hope Robbins, "The 'Arma Christi' Rolls," *Modern Language Review* 34 (1939): 415–21.

40. John Bale and John Leland, *The Laboryouse Journey and Serche of Johan Leylande, for Englandes Antiquities* (London, 1549; STC [2nd ed.] 15445), sig. D.v^r.

without reference to their mediating materials. On rare occasions, however, specific reference to a tabula was used to enhance the authenticity of a historiographical account. This is how Caxton employed his reference to the memorial table hanging by Chaucer's tomb, discussed above. In this instance it is arguably the object as much as its text that serves a subsequent narrative purpose, much as the references to Gawain's head and Caradoc's mantle at Dover Castle lend a sense of historicity to Caxton's edition of Malory and Leland's *A Learned and True Assertion* (the idea being that there is no need to take the author's word for it—go and check for yourself, if you like).⁴¹ Less certain are the brief lives of Richard de Bury in five manuscripts containing a chronicle of the cathedral at Durham. All five copy text from a tabula, but not all of them refer explicitly to the "tabula pensilis" (as does the text in MS Cotton Titus A.ii, at fol. 132r).⁴² Some of the chronicles were clearly copied from one another, but others seem to have copied the tabula independently.⁴³ This example provides a close analog to the independent transcription of the tabular text at St. Paul's by the Bohemian traveler and the chronicler of MS Harley 565. The decision to refer to a tabula (or not) in cases like these are less clearly linked to a scribe's interest in reinforcing the historicity of his account.

Even without reference to a specific, material tabula, however, subsequent narrators may still have used a tabular text to underpin the historical authenticity of their narratives. Tabular texts, as we have seen, often make explicit reference to material structures, monuments, and even measurements. Even the rhetorical force of these texts stems from the references they make to the authenticity of physical structures and the communities that inhabit or profit from them. There was likely little perceived need to refer to the material medium of a received tabular account when, after all, the account itself is invested in the material authenticity of the structure surrounding the tabula and its readers. Ironically, then, a tabular text is eminently volatile and prone to unattributed transcription.

We might risk going further in imagining the scene in which visitors interacted with a tabula. How did tabular texts straddle the indistinct boundary between derived reportage and direct experience of place? Some visitors of course could read the texts themselves, but others surely would have had to rely on the literate, whether in their own company or affiliated with the institution they were visiting, if they wanted to know what was written on a tabu-

41. For discussion of these "relics" see Richard Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp. 55 and 228–30. I thank Richard Moll for bringing these references to my attention.

42. Discussed in Denholm-Young, "Birth of a Chronicle."

43. *Ibid.*, 327.

lar board. The form of most tables, and certainly of those that survive, also encouraged communal participation. The Glastonbury tables, for instance, are written in a textura hand, and the parchment and boards are much larger than a typical codex (the written space averages about 16 in. × 38 in.). They are designed, in other words, to facilitate, on one hand, a situation set apart from ordinary experience by means of words and media that signify the sacredness or historicity of the place; and, on the other, to foster an occasion that is filled with talk, the verbal enunciation of the tabular text in a forum where words immediately die away but at the same time become the subject of further talk (and writing). Through speech, the words live again and therefore become part of the visitors' direct experience. Occasionally the tabulae even addressed their readers directly, much as epitaphs often did.⁴⁴ The "magna tabula" that hung in St. Paul's, as we have seen, addressed passersby in the second person: "Te quicumque leges, bene si vis noscere Reges / Anglos vel leges, hec iterando leges" (Whoever you are who read this: if you wish to know well the English kings or laws, read by perusing these [verses]). The text then uses the first person as if referring to itself, characterizing its work of recording as a simultaneous action to the reader's reading: "Reges maiores referam seu nobiliores / Quando regnarunt et vbi gens hos tumularunt" (I will record the greater or nobler kings, when they reigned, and where the people buried them).⁴⁵ The texts of the York tablets also use the first person, and in each of them it is clear that the chronicler is of course referring to his own work. Yet even in those cases it is difficult not to regard the first-person pronouns as referring to the tabulae themselves, or perhaps the structures, or even to the one reading the texts aloud to others, seeming to take up the role of author as he enunciates the first-person text.⁴⁶ The speaking subject is undefined, if not absent, and as a result this subject is liable to appropriation and overdetermination.⁴⁷ Perhaps, then, tabulae contributed to their own occlusion in some derived narratives, so far as can be discerned. Subsequent narratives were not necessarily

44. See, for example, the closing lines of two of the verse epitaphs that were displayed on or near Anne of Bohemia's tomb. Edited in Van Dussen, *From England to Bohemia*, Appendix A, the poems "Anglica regina," lines 19–20: "Vos qui transit, animam relevare vellitis / Ut superata nece, sic reparata prece"; and "Nobis natura florem," lines 99–100: "Qui legis et transis, rogo sis motus pietate, / Et pro regina, quero, funde preces."

45. Tyrrell, *A Chronicle of London*, p. 177 (translation adapted from *ibid.*, p. 184).

46. In conjunction with these examples, it is interesting to note the inscription on plates of copper fastened to the eastern tower of Cooling Castle in Kent: "Knoweth that beth and schul be / That i am mad in help of the cuntre / In knowyng of whyche thyng / Thys is chartre and wytnessyng." Here the first-person pronoun apparently refers to the castle, though it could also refer to the inscription itself. For discussion, see Cristina Maria Cervone, "John de Cobham and Cooling Castle's Charter Poem," *Speculum* 83 (2008): 884–916.

47. Cf. Cervone, "John de Cobham," p. 890.

derived directly from the *tabulae* themselves, but may have resulted in part from the talk that surrounded the tabular text.

Here it is instructive to return to Chaucer's *House of Fame*. Immediately following the passage I cited at the beginning, the Dreamer continues to epitomize the *Aeneid*, but the epic's mode of presentation in the temple shifts until it is unclear how the Dreamer's account—which mingles with his own experiences in the temple—is derived from any representational form on the walls. Jill Mann describes the transformation in a way that ties nicely with my discussion so far. The description of the "table of bras," with the translation of the first lines of the *Aeneid* into Middle English, Mann writes,

is duly followed by a lengthy résumé of the rest of the poem, which Chaucer claims he "sawgh" on the wall—in what form, it is not entirely clear, since with dream-like vagueness, the words give way to pictures; the story is at one moment engraved (157, 193), at another "peynted on the wal" (211), and shortly afterwards "grave" again (256). Already, that is, the secondhand summary is assuming independent life; the words refashion themselves into mental pictures, on which attention may linger or focus in greater detail.⁴⁸

The "dream-like vagueness" of Chaucer's poem is subtly employed to elide the distinction between reportage and new poetic emphases as a received poem is recast to become something else. In this context, it is interesting to reconsider the "I wol now singen, yif I can" of the brass table in Chaucer's text not as merely a rendering of the first line of the *Aeneid*, but also as the first-person utterance of an indeterminate voice—now Virgil, now the *tabula*, now the Dreamer. In the case of the Bohemian traveler, the transition from *tabula* to unascribed transcription has no "dream-like vagueness" about it, but is perhaps best characterized by an unconscious disregard for narrative context. Or perhaps experience and written record blend to become the same thing for him and (presumably) for others like him. But the result is essentially the same: *tabulae* are recast to become a less mediated kind of reported experience, and as narrative is transferred, the mediating form is elided in the process. The Bohemian visitor's itinerary gives the impression that he has taken his own measurements, or that he received certain legendary information from some other source than a tablet—the source is obscured, the location becomes replete not with texts and "legibility" in the traditional sense, but (through what is cast as a firsthand account) capable of conveying informa-

48. Jill Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2002), p. 8.

tion and meaning on its own—the stories are the structures, and the structures tell stories.

What kind of text, then, does a tabula offer? A tabula invites communal interaction with and dissemination of its narratives. It invites one to receive its narrative as fact, but (perhaps through its situation within an architectural setting) fact separable from its original documentary form, capable of being passed on as firsthand observation and reportage. I suggest, in fact, that when it comes to medieval travelers' itineraries and descriptions of monuments, tabulae may be a largely unacknowledged "missing link" between human experience and its reporting. Yet at the same time, knowledge that an account derived from a tabula should not be taken as proof that medieval travelers placed little value in firsthand experience. These travelers may very well have regarded interaction with a tabula as direct experience in the first place. A tabula is perhaps most appropriately regarded as a narrative cue, not expected to be replicated precisely, not entirely acknowledged—and gradually, as in Chaucer's departure from the "table of bras," the secondhand narrative draws away from its tabular source, taking on a form that was never there in the original in quite the same way at all.

PART FIVE

The Truth of Tales 2

Oral Performance and the Force of the Law

Taillefer at Hastings and Antgulilibix in Smithers

ANDREW TAYLOR

How far is it possible for those of us raised within a textual culture, for whom a law is always something written down, to understand an oral tradition? It is certainly not easy, but there have been forceful calls for us to do so, challenging cultural biases that have taken their shape over centuries. One call comes from Michael Clanchy, whose influential study *From Memory to Written Record* traces the growing dependence on written documents in medieval England during the first two and half centuries after the Norman Conquest of 1066. In the first edition, he expressed his ambivalence about the benefits of writing, setting out to “recover a little of what was lost by the growth of literacy as well as indicating what was gained.”¹ As he put it, one of the differences between his approach and that of others was that he endeavored “to avoid being prejudiced in favour of literacy.”² In his second edition he revealed a little of his rationale. He acknowledged that a bleak vision of the present was guiding his vision of the past, noting that “the mass killings of the twentieth century have been done by the most schooled populations in the world’s history.”³ He joins those who would argue not just that “there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism,” to cite Walter Benjamin, but that the very pro-

1. Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066–1307* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), p. 8.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

3. Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066–1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 11.

cess of producing documents has proved, again and again, to be inherently oppressive.⁴

A second call comes from the Supreme Court of Canada. In 1997 the Supreme Court, under Chief Justice Antonio Lamer, ruled on a massive land claim that had been made against the Province of British Columbia by two First Nations, the Gitksan and the Wet'suwet'en. The case had brought forward by the hereditary chiefs, and is known by the name of the first of these chiefs, Delgamuukw. It would become the longest trial in North American history, running for three and a half years, and producing some fifty thousand pages of transcript and related materials, before moving to the British Columbia Court of Appeal and then the Supreme Court, which ruled in 1997.⁵ In accordance with their traditions, the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en agreed that their chiefs would speak for the oral tradition of their individual houses within their various clans. But the trial judge, Allan McEachern, was deeply suspicious of the oral evidence and, although he did not prevent its being presented, gave it little weight. At one crucial juncture, after one of the chiefs had sung a traditional song, he commented, "This is a trial, not a performance."⁶

The Supreme Court concluded that in his dismissive treatment of the oral evidence McEachern had erred, and that "had the oral histories been correctly assessed, the conclusions on . . . issues of fact might have been very different."⁷ The Supreme Court accordingly set out the principle by which oral tradition was henceforth to be handled in Canadian courts:

Notwithstanding the challenges created by the use of oral histories as proof of historical facts, the laws of evidence must be adapted in order that this type of evidence can be accommodated and placed on an *equal footing* with the types of historical evidence that courts are familiar with, which largely consists of historical documents.⁸

For those used to written law and textual paradigms of knowledge, following this principle will not come easily.

4. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 256. One forceful instance of such a critique is R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

5. The page count is that of Val Napoleon in "Delgamuukw: A Legal Straitjacket for Oral Historians," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 20.2 (2005): 123–55, p. 137, n. 78. For accounts of the trial, see n. 28 in this essay.

6. Proceedings at Trial, Smithers Registry 0843, 1987–05–27, p. 673.

7. *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, p. 6.

8. *Ibid.*, para. 87, italics added.

Oral traditions exist in their tellings, in their performance. The training of the strong tradition-bearer builds towards performance in front of the community, and the force of that performance helps maintain the tradition's reliability and continuity.⁹ One way of understanding the "equal footing" principle would be as an injunction to take performance seriously. In that spirit, I wish to consider two oral performances, or, rather, the written accounts of two oral performances. One performance took place in 1066, the other took place almost at the beginning of the Delgamuukw trial in 1987. Both endeavored to legitimize territorial claims.

Taillefer at Hastings

The most detailed account of the performance that began the Battle of Hastings comes from the twelfth-century poet Wace, who is probably best known for his account of early British history, including the deeds of Arthur, in his *Brut*. Wace was commissioned by Henry II to write a history of his Norman predecessors, and sometime during the 1160s and '70s dutifully produced the *Roman de Rou*, some twelve thousand lines covering the Danish prince Rou's conquest of Normandy, the endless wars that followed, the Norman succession down to William, William's conquest of England, and the struggles of his sons.¹⁰ Wace devotes nearly two thousand lines to the Battle of Hastings, describing the behavior of the two armies the night before, the deposition of the troops, the attacks and retreats, much slaughter, and numerous feats of individual bravery. Of the feats Wace describes, perhaps the most striking is that of Taillefer ("Iron-Bearer"), whose courage inspires the troops. As the Normans approach the English line, Taillefer rides before them and sings:

Taillefer, qui molt bien chantout,
 sor un cheval qui tost alout,
 devant le duc alout chantant
 de Karlemaigne e de Rollant,
 e d'Oliver e des vassals
 qui morurent en Rencevals. (II, 8013–18)

9. I draw here upon the terminology of John D. Niles in *Homo Narrans: The Poetics and Anthropology of Oral Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

10. *Le Roman de Rou de Wace*, ed. A. J. Holden, 3 vols. (Paris: SA. & J. Picard, 1970–73), 3:13–14; *The History of the Norman People: Wace's Roman de Rou*, trans. Glyn S. Burgess with notes by Glyn S. Burgess and Elisabeth M. C. Van Houts (Rochester, NY: Boydell, 2004), pp. xxiii–xxiv. I have made some minor changes to Burgess's translation to facilitate line-by-line comparison with the original.

[Taillefer, a very good singer, rode before the duke on a swift horse, singing of Charlemagne and of Roland, and of Oliver and of the vassals who died at Rencesvals.]

The song had become the Norman battle anthem.

There were many songs and stories of Charlemagne and Roland, but the story of Roland's death was the emotional core of the tradition. This death is the central moment in the most famous telling, that of the poem we know as *The Song of Roland*, which was copied within a generation of Wace into a small and modest manuscript, Oxford Bodleian Library Digby 86. This is the emotional core that Taillefer sings. Indeed many have assumed, all too hastily, that what Taillefer sings must have been some version of the very poem found in the Bodleian manuscript.

When they have ridden close to the English, Taillefer begs for the right to strike the first blow, William grants his request, and Taillefer rides forward, killing one English man with his lance. Then drawing his sword, he cries to the Normans, "Come on, come on! What are you doing! Strike, strike!" (*Venez, venez! Que faites vos? Ferez, ferez!*, lines 8037–38). The English surround him, battle is joined:

Donc l'ont Engleis avironé
al segont colp qu'il out doné.
Eis vos noise levé e cri,
d'ambes parz poplë estormi;
Normant a assailer entendent
e li Engleis bien se deffendent.
li un fierent, li alter botent,
tant sunt hardi ne s'entredotent.
Eis vos la bataille assemblee
donc encore est renomee. (II, 8039–48)

[Then the English surrounded him when he had struck his second blow. Behold the sudden noise and shouting, on both sides the people were roused to action. The Normans set about attacking, and the English defended themselves well, some striking, others thrusting. They were so bold that they had no fear of each other. Behold how the battle was joined, which is still greatly renowned.]

This is the last we hear of Taillefer.

Wace was working for people who knew the story well, so he felt no need to explain that after he was surrounded Taillefer was killed, and he has a paratactic style, which leaves causal connections implicit. Twice in his account of this crucial moment Wace tells us to behold! (“Eis vos!”), and each time this call follows closely upon Taillefer’s action, as if he and his song were responsible for the noise of battle (*noise levé e cri*, in the third line) and for inciting the men so that they abandon fear (*ne s’entredotent*, in the eighth line).

The implicit link between the bravery of Charlemagne and his knights and that of the Normans is one Wace will return to nearly a thousand lines later, praising William directly. In Wace’s surprisingly unexalted account of Norman history, William has always been just and honorable within the limits of a brutal situation. As Wace approaches the foundation of the Norman dynasty in England, however, Wace makes William much more: a pious man, who will, with right and justice, advance his claim and triumph with God’s help. In a passage that might almost be taken from Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, Wace describes how Harold and his Saxons spend the night before the battle in impious drunken revelry, while the Normans betake themselves to prayer, vowing that if they are spared they will never again eat meat on Saturdays. Following his victory, in a striking episode, which Wace greatly expands from a few hints in his sources, William has his tent pitched on the field itself, among the dead “entre les morz fist son tref tendre” (line 8887). Then he disarms, and his men see his battered shield and helmet. They all agree:

“Tel bier ne fu,
qui si poinsist ne si ferist
ne qui d’armes tel soffrist;
pois Rollant ne pois Olivier
n’out en terre tel chevalier.” (II, 8932–36)

[No man was ever so brave when spurring his horse or striking blows in such a way or supported such a weight of arms. Since Roland and Oliver there was never such a knight on earth.]

Having advanced with a song in praise of the French dead, William in victory now lies down to rest among the English and Norman dead.

Quite how we should read this scene is unclear. Wace’s history offers a puzzlingly dispassionate chronicling of two centuries of almost continual warfare that is waged as much against the civilian population as against the knights

and soldiers. In this account, all parties, Normans as much as the French, Christian Normans as much as their sometime allies the pagan Danes, kings and barons whose cause is just as much as kings and barons whose cause is not, routinely terrorize the civilian population by widespread murder, rape, arson, and pillage, often reducing the survivors to starvation by destroying the very crops in the fields. This moral ambivalence invites us to read the episode in which William lies down among the dead as an implied critique.¹¹ F. H. M. Le Saux, for example, finds the episode “decidedly grisly and not altogether complimentary to William himself.”¹² But the episode might equally be taken as an echo of a passage in the *Chanson de Roland* where Charlemagne surveys the dead, actually going so far as to lie down among them.¹³ What is clear is that the deeds of Charlemagne, Roland, and Oliver frame Wace’s account of the Battle of Hastings. Charlemagne emblemizes William’s righteousness, Oliver and Roland his courage; together they legitimize his reign.¹⁴ If we take the final reference to Roland and Oliver as a reference to the oral tradition and the songs of their deeds, then the pattern is one in which singing provokes noise and violence and then noise and violence are resolved once more into song.

Wace is not the only one to refer to Taillefer or to the singing about Roland and Oliver at Hastings. There are no less than five independent, or largely independent, accounts of a performance: three of them mention Taillefer by name, one describing him juggling his sword, two mentioning his singing.¹⁵ The sharpest contrast to Wace’s account comes in that of the Anglo-

11. On Wace’s “severe ambivalence” about his heroes, see Laura Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 49ff.; cf. Emily Albu, *The Normans in Their Histories: Propaganda, Myth and Subversion* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2001), pp. 225–26.

12. F. H. M. Le Saux, *A Companion to Wace* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005), p. 251.

13. “Le gentilz reis descendut est a piét, / Culchet s’a tere” (lines 2479–80), and “Li emperere s’est culcét en un pré” (line 2486). I owe this suggestion to Laura Ashe. On the symbolic importance of Charlemagne’s perusal of the dead, see Eugene Vance, “Roland and the Poetics of Memory,” in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structural Criticism*, ed. Josué Harari (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 374–403, esp. pp. 394–96, reading the desolation of the battlefield as an expression of the emptying of epic language itself.

14. The connection has often been noted. See, for example, David Douglas, “The ‘Song of Roland’ and the Norman Conquest of England,” *French Studies* 14.2 (1960): 99–116.

15. The accounts are the *Carmen de Hastingae proelio*, which may be contemporary and is often attributed to Guy d’Amiens, and which mentions a *histrion* or *mimus* who juggles a sword; the *Gesta regum* of William of Malmesbury, begun by 1125, which mentions a “cantilena Rolandi” sung by the Normans; the *Historia Anglorum* of Henry of Huntington, completed by 1129, which mentions Taillefer singing of ancient warriors; the *Estoire des Engleis* of Gaimar, completed by 1140, in which Taillefer is described as a *joglere* who juggles a sword; and Wace’s, *Roman de Rou*, completed by 1170. See William Sayers, “The Jongleur Taillefer at Hastings: Antecedents and Literary Fate,” *Viator* 14 (1983): 77–88.

Norman cleric Gaimar, whose *Estoire des Engleis* or *History of the English* predates Wace's *Roman de Rou* by some thirty years, making him "the very first vernacular French chronicler whose work has survived."¹⁶ Gaimar shapes a strange, hybrid, cross-cultural account, working chiefly from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and reworking its short entries in English prose into lengthier stories of love and heroism, told according to the conventions of romance and in Anglo-Norman verse. Anxious to integrate the Norman aristocracy into insular history, Gaimar minimizes the battle that Wace describes at such length.¹⁷ His brief account of Hastings is a kind of legerdemain, as he "somehow manages both to describe and to pass over [the Norman Conquest] with studied casualness."¹⁸ He mentions only one action with any specificity, and that is Taillefer's performance. But Gaimar tells the story from the Anglo-Saxon perspective. He calls Taillefer a *jogle* but makes no mention of his singing; instead he says that Taillefer juggled his spear and sword, and that all who saw him considered that he was performing "merveilles" and "enchantement" (lines 5278, 5291).

From these two accounts it is possible to attempt to reconstruct a single performance. The most extensive effort in this line is by John Southworth in his popular study *The English Medieval Minstrel*. Southworth notes the discrepancy between Wace's description of Taillefer's singing and Gaimar's description of Taillefer juggling his sword. He concludes that the difference reflects the Norman and English experiences of the battle: the Normans catch enough of the words to recognize their familiar battle anthem: "It is his *singing* they will remember."¹⁹ Those further away, the Normans on the wings or the English, can only see him as he juggles his sword, and his actions, as he tosses a sword in the air, "cast an incomprehensible spell."²⁰

Given their strong literary shape, trying to use these accounts to reconstruct an actual performance may seem a little like trying to reconstruct nineteenth-century American history by watching Westerns, an effort not so much impossible as naive. Short remarks, for example, that "Taillefer is an ubiquitous figure who belongs more to literature than to history."²¹ But we cannot stop there. To reduce Taillefer to a purely literary figure is to privilege

16. Geffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis / History of the English*, ed. and trans. Ian Short (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. xv.

17. I echo here Short's phrasing on p. xlviii. I have drawn heavily on his discussion of Gaimar's approach to writing Anglo-Norman history in his introduction.

18. R. H. C. Davis, *The Normans and Their Myth* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976), p. 127.

19. John Southworth, *The English Medieval Minstrel* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1989), p. 34, italics in original.

20. Ibid., pp. 30–35.

21. Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis / History of the English*, p. 428, note to lines 5269ff.

a rarefied academic skepticism over the more popular curiosity, the desire to know what really happened—a desire that will not easily be denied. Such textualization distances us even further from the performance—from the tune, the intonation . . . the power of the human voice. The five texts I have mentioned offer little on these matters, and only those who seek to hear the lost performance in their mind's ear will notice the absence. If you are convinced that Taillefer can only be approached as a literary figure, you will not ask what he sounded like. Such a denial implies not only that Taillefer's performance does not really matter (that it was not an essential part of the battle) but that *no* performance really matters.²² In Western law that has sometimes seemed to be the case. In the words of McEachern, a “trial is not a performance.”

But losses attend the refusal to explore oral performance, however dubious its imaginative reconstruction must be. Here it is worth considering the very different approaches taken to teaching medieval English and teaching medieval French. Teachers of Middle English, especially Chaucer, have long been committed to sounding out the poetry in class. As V. A. Kolve and Glending Olson put it, in their introduction to the Norton edition of *The Canterbury Tales*, “the best way to learn ME is to hear it spoken.”²³ The tradition, now supported by a rich array of recordings, owes much to the almost shamanistic performances of J. R. R. Tolkien, who was convinced that he could sense in the West Midlands dialect of *Ancrene Wisse* a language of his own ancestors that had maintained “close touch with a good living speech—a soil somewhere in England.”²⁴ Anglo-Norman, falling uneasily between two national literatures, lacks the tradition. As a result it is very hard to hear what it might have sounded like; there are very few modern recordings to turn to for help on either its phonology or its possible modes of performance.²⁵ Of

22. There are numerous detailed accounts of the battle by modern historians that make no mention of Taillefer at all. See, for example, Dorothy Whitelock et al., *The Norman Conquest: Its Setting and Impact, A Book Commemorating the Ninth Centenary of the Battle of Hastings* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1966).

23. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales: Nine Tales and the General Prologue*, ed. V. A. Kolve and Glending Olson (New York: Norton, 1989), p. xiii.

24. J. R. R. Tolkien, “*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meidhad*,” *Essays and Studies* 14 (1929): 104–26, p. 106. Tolkien's performances of *Beowulf* were famous. See Humphrey Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography* (London: HarperCollins, 1977), pp. 179–80.

25. This statement is less true of Anglo-Norman song, or of shorter works, such as the *lais* of Marie de France, which can be performed as song, a number of which have now been recited for the Chaucer Studio, but also sung by professional musicians, such as Anne Azéma of the Boston Camerata. In comparison, there have been relatively few recordings of the *Chanson de Roland*. I discuss some that I have been able to locate in “Editing Sung Objects: The Challenge of Digby 26,” in *The Book Unbound: Editing and Reading Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. Siân Echard and Stephen Partridge (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 78–104, pp. 93–97. On the unfortunate position of Anglo-Norman within nationalist narratives, see

course, we can never really know what Anglo-Norman or Middle English poetry sounded like. *Beowulf* has been recorded many times; indeed a recording of Seamus Heaney reading from his own translation now accompanies the teaching materials for the Norton anthology, making a performance of *Beowulf* the cornerstone of the English literary canon.²⁶ The breadth of the gap between this stately performance, with its deliberate echoes of Heaney's deep-chested forebears, and the flowing song of Christopher Page or the vivid characterizations of Benjamin Bagby shows just how far these performances are speculative fiction.²⁷ Modern performances of Wace would be no less speculative. But if we consign the performances of the past to the unknowable about which we must be silent, then we will be left not only with an attenuated appreciation of the poetry but with cultural history that is badly distorted. The Normans will appear to be an aggressively and exclusively textual culture, using writing, much as they used stone castles or the couched-lance charge, as a technology of conquest, driving forward with the great inscription of English property holdings in Domesday Book. We will overlook what the stories of Taillefer's performance show us: that the Normans actually had a hybrid culture, and that the Norman chivalric elite, with scribes at their beck and call, cherished an oral tradition.

Antgullibix in Smithers

The Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en peoples filed their claim against the Province of British Columbia in 1984.²⁸ As mentioned, the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en, in

Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "General Introduction: What's in a Name: The 'French' of England," in Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al., eds., *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England, c. 1100–c.1500* (Woodbridge: York Medieval, 2009), pp. 1–13.

26. M. H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt, gen. eds., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Audio Companion* (New York: Norton, 2001), disc 1, tracks 2–5.

27. Benjamin Bagby, *Beowulf* (New York: Charles Morrow Productions, 2006); Christopher Page sings in episode 1, "An English Speaking World," of Robert MacNeil, Robert McCrum, and William Cran, *The Story of English* (New York and London: MacNeil-Lehrer Productions and the BBC, 1986).

28. Two invaluable, although clearly partisan, accounts of the trial are Dara Culhane, *The Pleasure of the Crown: Anthropology, Law, and First Nations* (Burnaby, BC: Talonbooks, 1998), which offers a lucid and approachable account of the legal issues; and Don Monet and Skanu'u (Ardyce Wilson), *Colonialism on Trial: Indigenous Land Rights and the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Sovereignty Case* (Gabroloa Island, BC: New Society, 1992), which uses excerpts from the transcripts, cartoons, sketches, photos, and occasional newspaper clips to provide a condensed narrative. The two anthropologists employed as expert witnesses by the plaintiffs, Richard Daly for the Gitksan and Antonia Mills for the Wet'suwet'en, have both published books based on their reports. See Daly, *Our Box Was Full: An Ethnography for the Delgamuukw*

accordance with their traditions, agreed that their elders would speak for the oral tradition of their individual houses within their various clans. The result was one of the most extensive transcriptions of an oral tradition of all time. It was also one that from the first the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en regarded with considerable ambivalence. One of their legal counsel, Louise Mandel, specifically requested that the transcripts of the proceedings not be released to the general public lest they be used by other people not connected with the trial, such as academics.²⁹ As I understand it, this concern relates to the cultural knowledge disclosed at the trial, above all to the contents of the oral history of each house, which for the Gitksan is called the *adaawk*.³⁰ The current political situation makes it difficult to secure permission, the Gitksan having divided sharply over how to handle the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline through their territory. The passage in the transcripts that I will discuss has been published on several occasions, but I will nonetheless respect the unease expressed by the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en chiefs about releasing the *adaawk*, quoting from the transcript only the words of the lawyers and the trial judge.

At approximately 2:00 p.m. on May 27, 1987, Peter Grant, one of the lawyers for the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en, called upon Mary Johnson, chief Antigulilix of the Fireweed clan, to sing a dirge that forms part of the *adaawk* of her house. The Chief Justice was perplexed: "I have some difficulty understanding why the actual wording of the song is necessary. But I have to leave that to counsel."³¹ Only when Grant told Johnson, for a second time, to go ahead and *sing* did the Chief Justice fully realize what was about to happen.

Plaintiffs (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005); and Mills, *Eagle Down Is Our Law: Witsuwit'en Law, Feasts, and Land Claims* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994). The collection of essays edited by Frank Cassidy, *Aboriginal Title in British Columbia: Delgamuukw v. The Queen, Proceedings of a Conference Held September 10 & 11, 1991* (Victoria, BC: Institute for Research on Public Policy and Oolichan Books, 1992), provides some further context on the trial. The legal literature on the implications of *Delgamuukw* is now enormous.

29. Mandel requested that the chiefs be given some assurance that "their evidence not be used generally without their consent being somehow capable of being expressed." Proceedings at Trial, Smithers Registry 0843, 1987-05-11, p. 31. McEachern initially reserved judgment but expressed concern at imposing a publication ban on the evidence or giving the witnesses some kind of copyright over their evidence. No ban was ever imposed, but in practice it was difficult to consult the transcripts, since there were few copies outside the offices of law firms. A copy of the transcripts, running to 369 volumes, is now housed in the Law Library of the University of British Columbia.

30. On the use of the *adaawk* in a legal context, see Val Napoleon, "Living Together: Gitksan Reasoning as a Foundation for Consent," in *Between Consenting People: Political Community and the Meaning of Consent*, ed. Jeremy Webber and Colin M. Macleod (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), pp. 45-76.

31. Proceedings at Trial, Smithers Registry 0843, 1987-05-11, p. 670.

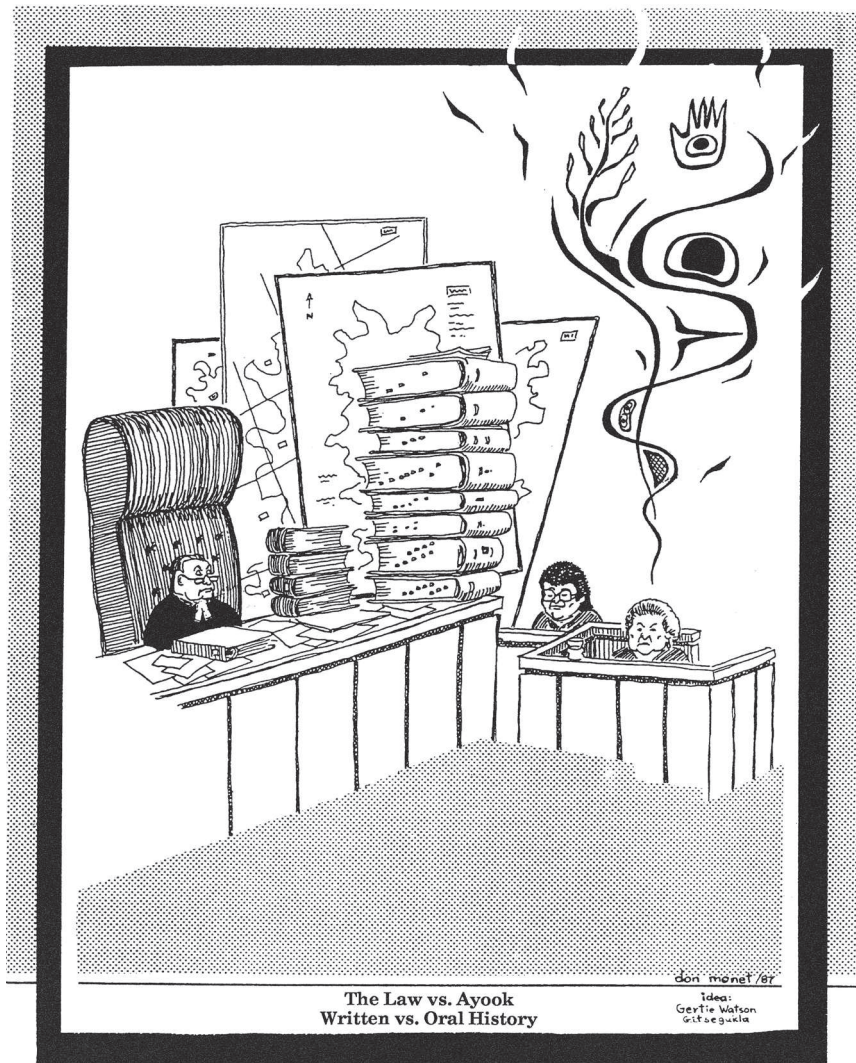


FIGURE 1. Plate 1 (with the kind permission of Don Monet)

He expressed grave reservations, but Grant was firm: “And as counsel, it is—it is my submission that it is necessary for you to appreciate—” That was the key word, *appreciate*. Here the Chief Justice cut him short: “I have a tin ear, Mr. Grant, so it’s not going to do any good to sing it to me.”³² The comment would become notorious (see Figure 1). Despite his unease, the Chief Justice

32. Ibid., pp. 670–71.

let Grant continue, and so, after a little more discussion of how and when the words were to be translated, Mary Johnson sang. In the transcript, this is all that appears:

(WITNESS SINGS SONG)

Grant then asked Johnson to explain what the words meant in English, and from the transcript one gets some sense of the narrative she had sung, a story of two sisters lamenting the death of their brother who has died from starvation.

It is hard to grasp the power of this song. Mary Johnson's performance has been noted repeatedly, as has McEachern's reference to his tin ear.³³ But the transcripts provide little sense of the force of the performance, of what it was like. Indeed, it is only when a description of the performance is incorporated into a story that it becomes comprehensible to those who were not there. If oral culture exists only in performance, it is accessible only through narrative.³⁴ So, just as we turn to Wace or Gaimar for the story of Taillefer, for the story of Mary Johnson we might turn to the account given by Hugh Brody, an anthropologist, filmmaker, and author who appeared as an expert witness for the plaintiffs:

Mary Johnson sang. Her voice was strong, and the sadness of the lament was clear, anguished and startling. My eyes filled with tears. I had heard the story and the song before. It did not belong in this court, against the opposition of the judge, resounding in his tin ear. Yet it was somehow perfect, a complete expression of the Gitksan language, in all its senses, with all its meanings. I looked around me. Everyone had their eyes fixed on Mary Johnson. The sound of her voice was the only sound in the room. The drabness of the place was transformed. The Gitksan people in the court were mourning a starvation long long ago. Another time, another kind of place. Mary Johnson transported us.³⁵

33. For discussions of Mary Johnson's singing and the "tin ear" comment, see, among others, Leslie Hall Pinder, *The Carriers of No: After the Land Claims Trial* (Vancouver, BC: Lazara, 1991), pp. 4–10; Hugh Brody, *The Other Side of Eden: Hunters, Farmers and the Shaping of the World* (Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 2000), pp. 208–13; Val Napoleon, "Legal Strait-jacket," p. 131, n. 42; and John Sutton Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal–White Relations* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), pp. 276–77.

34. The same point could also be made about the facts presented within legal judgments, however, since these judgments are dependent on concealed narratives, as Eric Reiter argues in "Fact, Narrative, and the Judicial Uses of History," *Indigenous Law Journal* 8.1 (2010): 55–79.

35. Brody, *Other Side of Eden*, pp. 211–12.

As Brody tells the story, the quality of Mary Johnson's singing is what makes the historical moment poignant and memorable. Her personal authority, rooted in her emotional commitment, her mastery of the old language, and her courage, unifies the room, incorporating even the nonaboriginal observers. The place is transformed by the magic of performance; the people, as a group, are transported.

But not the judge. When McEachern ruled, he rejected the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en claim to the land. He questioned the level of both their political and social organization in the past, noting in particular the absence of writing and of the wheel as indications that they fell within a "primitive order," and applying Hobbes's famous formula to characterize their life prior to European contact as "nasty, brutish, and short."³⁶

Brody now moves quickly, and after about a page discussing the judge's embarrassment at the performance, both his apparent personal discomfort and his professional sense that he is encountering an impediment or hindrance (an embarrassment in the technical legal sense), Brody turns to the victory ten years later in the Supreme Court.

Among his conclusions he noted "that aboriginal life in the territory was, at best, 'nasty, brutish, and short.'"

I quote the judgment to arouse incredulity as well as anger. It seemed to be an exercise in preconception, a ruling in astonishing disregard for the evidence. In due course, in late 1997, the Supreme Court of Canada overturned it in almost every respect, and ruled, in particular, that the British Columbia judge's failure to pay due attention to the chiefs' oral evidence invalidated all his findings. The Supreme Court ordered a retrial. The tin ear was recognized as deaf indeed.³⁷

As Brody tells the story, Mary Johnson's performance leads to the triumph of the Supreme Court decision in 1997. As with Wace, and his pairing of the Taillefer's song with the victory at Hastings, the causality is implicit, but "disregard for the evidence" leads naturally or "in due course" to a reversal; the failure to note the oral evidence is a weakness "in particular," and McEachern's own metaphor, the tin ear, becomes a synecdoche for the methodological failure that invalidates his judgment.

36. Allan McEachern, *Reasons for Judgment in the Supreme Court of British Columbia between Delgamuukw, also Known as Ken Muldoe, Suing on his Own Behalf and on Behalf of all the Members of the HOUSE OF DELGAMUUKW -Plaintiffs- and Her Majesty the Queen, Defendant* (Smithers, BC: British Columbia Court Registry, 1991), p. 13.

37. Brody, *Other Side of Eden*, p. 213.

Brody's account might be seen as a distortion of the Supreme Court's legal reasoning (after all, the Supreme Court judges did not hear Mary Johnson sing and might have been as embarrassed as the trial judge by such a kind of evidence). Or Brody's account might be seen as a storyteller's mythologization, condensing complex conflicts with many participants into a single dramatic confrontation. Like Wace, he invites us to behold the event and leaves the causal connection between what he shows us implicit. But even if the equal-footing ruling is not directly attributable to the force of Mary Johnson's song, it is a ruling that obliges us to recognize the force of her song.

I say "us" and I do indeed think that a fairly broad group of people is implicated in this shift; it is not just Canadian judges or those fighting in Canadian courts, and it is not just those concerned directly with First Nation land claims or indigenous rights. There is a reciprocal relation between public attitudes and Supreme Court decisions. When Lamer and his fellow judges recognized the cultural authority of indigenous oral tradition they were responding to broad shifts in attitudes, both in Canada and elsewhere. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 2007 lays out similar principles.³⁸ In the field of medieval history, one might argue that Clanchy is expressing the same general attitude when he writes that he wishes "to avoid being prejudiced in favour of literacy." Both Clanchy and the Supreme Court are deliberately disavowing a master narrative of the kind McEachern appealed to, which would cast literacy as the crucial measure of a society's rise from barbarism to enlightenment.

The principle of "equal footing" can be understood relatively modestly as a simple extension of fairness. Since aboriginal Canadians originally relied on oral rather than written tradition, to insist that their descendants produce written records would, as Chief Justice Brian Dickson observed in 1985, effectively "render nugatory" many rights established by treaty.³⁹ But the "equal footing" ruling can also be understood as an extremely radical judgment, one that is in keeping with the principle in the Canadian Constitution that aboriginal rights are *sui generis*, understood to mean that aboriginal rights

38. See in particular, Article 5, which recognizes the right of indigenous people "to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State"; Article 13, which recognizes their right to "revitalize, use, develop and transmit" their oral traditions; Article 31, which recognizes their right to "develop their cultural heritage"; Article 25, which recognizes their "distinctive spiritual relationship" with their traditional lands; and Article 27, which calls for "a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process, giving *due recognition* to indigenous peoples' laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources" (emphasis added).

39. *Simon v. The Queen*, SCR 387, at para. 44.

and the law that expresses them not only employ fundamentally different procedures for establishing truth but also understand truth in different ways, that they differ from Western law epistemologically.⁴⁰ In following this direction, the courts must recognize that European intellectual norms are precisely that: not the expression of some transcendental pure reason, not an objective logic that transcends cultural differences and is equally good for all, not the final triumph of millennia of cultural development that supplanted barbarism, but rather one way of seeing the world, with its own insights and its own blindnesses.⁴¹ This recognition imposes upon the courts the responsibility of recognizing the edges of its own worldview, the better to acknowledge the legitimacy of what lies outside them. With the 1997 decision, the Canadian courts assume the responsibility of recognizing and problematizing eurocentrism, and that term is now regularly employed by the Chief Justice, Beverley McLachlan.⁴²

One term for this challenge is reconciliation. Like embarrassment, it has both a technical legal meaning, the integration of fundamentally different systems on terms that respect both, and a more general one, “the act of restoring estranged peoples or parties to friendship” (*OED*, s.v. “reconciliation,” def. 1b). These two registers of meaning have begun to overlap in recent judgments, such as that of the late justice David Vickers in the *Tsilhqot’in* case near William’s Lake.⁴³ Academics have much to learn from this evolving

40. On the extension of the “sui generis” principle to aboriginal jurisprudence at large, see James Youngblood (Sa’Ke’j) Henderson, *First Nations Jurisprudence and Aboriginal Rights: Defining the Just Society* (Saskatoon: Native Law Centre, University of Saskatchewan, 2006), p. 127.

41. Thus John Borrows, in *Recovering Canada: The Resurgence of Indigenous Law* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), argues that the Supreme Court’s “description of the social role of Aboriginal oral histories is striking not because it is inaccurate—indeed, the court is sensitive to the various roles these traditions can play—but because it betrays the court’s lack of awareness of the social function of common law” (p. 15).

42. See, for example, McLachlan’s comments in *Mitchell v. M. N. R.*: “judges must resist facile assumptions based on Eurocentric traditions of gathering and passing on historical facts” (para. 27). In this regard, the principle of “equal footing” goes beyond both the call for “due recognition” in Article 27 of the United Nations declaration or (to turn to jurisprudence in the United States) the approach taken by Andrew Wiget and other members of the research team on behalf of the Zuni in New Mexico. See Andrew Wiget, “Recovering the Remembered Past: Folklore and Oral History in the Zuni Trust Lands Damages Case,” in *Zuni and the Courts: A Struggle for Sovereign Land Rights*, ed. E. Richard Hart (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), pp. 172–87; and comparison to the principles in *Delgamuukw* in Bruce Granville Miller, *Oral History on Trial: Recognizing Aboriginal Narratives in the Courts* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), pp. 60–66.

43. “The present Canadian community is now faced with the challenge of acknowledging past wrongs and building a consensual and lasting reconciliation with Aboriginal people.” *Tsilhqot’in Nation v. British Columbia*, 2007 BCSC 1700, para. 7.

jurisprudence. Arguably some Canadian judges follow a more theoretically advanced practice than most academics, at least those in fields such as literary or cultural studies, because the judges cannot work so exclusively in a single disciplinary register. The courts are one of the few places where radically different ways of knowing are now brought into contact.⁴⁴

Acknowledging the legitimacy of fundamentally different ways of thinking will be difficult. A recent exchange in the bulletin of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, CAUT, illustrates the challenge. The exchange begins with a call from the president for “a full-scale transformation in thinking . . . so that indigenous knowledge is seen to come from a position of strength with a great deal to teach and to learn.”⁴⁵ This provoked an angry rejoinder from another professor: “What does it mean that my training and my career as a scholar require ‘a full-scale transformation in thinking.’ Is it to accommodate the raven or bear?”⁴⁶ If by “the raven or bear” one means traditional ways of organizing knowledge, I think the answer must be yes, that is precisely what needs to be accommodated. That is what the principle of reconciliation demands.

For medievalists this methodological debate will be familiar. What is at stake is the conflict between truth, the central value in a referential epistemology that reflects textual modes of thinking, and “troth,” the central value in an epistemology based on personal integrity and communal identity.⁴⁷ The rise of textual attitudes in monastic and clerical culture in the eleventh century caused a crisis in theology, as Brian Stock has shown, and the rise of textual attitudes in administrative culture caused a crisis among the English people at large in the fourteenth century, as Richard Firth Green has shown. One of the points that medievalists might bring to the contemporary discussion, then,

44. For a more pessimistic assessment of the current jurisprudence, see Val Napoleon, on the implications of *Benoit v. Canada* of 2002, which she finds “a chilling example of the continuing problems encountered by aboriginal claimants when tendering oral histories as evidence” and “a regression from the promising principle” set out by the Supreme Court in *Delgamuukw* (“Legal Straitjacket,” pp. 133 and 136). Bruce Miller, on the other hand, concurs with Peter W. Hutchins that there is “cause for limited optimism” (*Oral History on Trial*, p. 113). The limitations imposed by having aboriginal tradition heard within the context of the European legal system are a recurring concern of John Borrows. See, in particular, “Sovereignty’s Alchemy: An Analysis of *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*,” *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 37.3 (1999): 537–96.

45. Wayne Peters, citing Dan Longboat, “Indigenous Knowledge Can Enrich Our Campuses,” President’s Column, *CAUT/ACPPU Bulletin* 59.1 (January 2012): A1.

46. Heinz Klatt, letter in *CAUT/ACPPU Bulletin* 59.2 (February 2012): A2.

47. I draw here on Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), who writes of the “subjugation of human to propositional truth” that was “reflected in *truth*’s Ricardian encroachment upon *sooth*” (p. 40).

is that textual epistemology and the commitment to written law in western Europe were less monolithic than often supposed. They came late; they were contested. To recognize that the Normans and their descendants had a hybrid oral-textual culture, and that both their elites and their peasantry regarded writing with great ambivalence, is to suggest that European and indigenous histories have more in common than is often supposed.

For academics reconciliation will be a serious challenge because so often Western intellectuals have defined themselves in opposition to oral tradition. From Bernard of Anger's investigation of the legends of Ste. Foy at the beginning of the eleventh century, to Derrida's chastisement of Lévi-Strauss for his celebration of Nambiquara innocence, textualized scholars have worked to contain the energies of oral tradition.⁴⁸ Now we are beginning to hear oral tradition as it speaks back. Reconciliation now has the force of law behind it. Of course, the principle of "equal footing" is only binding within the Canadian courts and for matters that touch on indigenous rights, but the reasoning behind the approach commands much wider attention. If, with Michael Clanchy, we wish to avoid being prejudiced in favor of literacy, this is a model we can follow. Doing so will pose a methodological challenge both to those who maintain Enlightenment models of objective inquiry and want no truck with "the raven or bear" and to those who have made sustained Derridean skepticism almost a reflexive gesture. If we cannot use the word "wisdom" without irony or evoke the power of song without suspicion, it will be difficult for us to accommodate traditional wisdom.

Let me end, then, by evoking the power of Mary Johnson's singing. A version of her lament has been recorded on the soundtrack of a documentary on

48. On Bernard of Anger's attitude toward local oral tradition, cf. Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Modes of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 666–67, to Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, *Writing Faith: Text, Sign and History in the Miracles of Sainte Foy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 24. Relatively few scholars have challenged Derrida's skeptical reading of the writing lesson directly. One forceful exception is Jonathan Goldberg, *Writing Matter: From the Hands of the English Renaissance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990). As Goldberg argues, "If it is illegitimate for Levi-Strauss to read the Nambikwara writing lesson as an exemplary moment in the history of the west, it is equally illegitimate for Derrida to do so, especially when his generalization dispels the particulars" (p. 17). The particular situation of the Nambiquara has been greatly affected by the construction of the highway through their traditional lands in the state of Mato Grosso. See David Price, *Before the Bulldozer: The Nambiquara Indians and the World Bank* (Washington, DC: Seven Locks, 1989). According to the *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*, as of 2008 the Nambiquara had conducted their own census and their population was "growing slightly." Minority Rights Group International, *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples—Brazil: Nambiquara*, 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49749d4bc.html> (accessed December 4, 2012).

the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en land claim *On Indian Land*.⁴⁹ As the film begins and the camera pans across the landscape, Mary Johnson's voice seems to sweep over her traditional lands. The film provides precious archival footage, without which Mary Johnson's voice might be lost entirely, and we would be left with the memories of those privileged to hear her, such as Brody himself when he calls "the sadness" of her lament "clear, anguished and startling." But even as a recording, the voice comes to us within the story that Brody is shaping as well as just recording, a story that blends landscape and traditional song according to long-standing Romantic conventions.⁵⁰ Within other conventions, the song would be presented differently and evoke differently; its mournful notes would not necessarily carry the power to *transport* its listeners, the power Brody attributes to them in his written account of the trial; the relation of voice and landscape would be subtly different. But however it was related, and within whatever kind of implicit narrative it was placed, there would remain a fundamental connection between the force of Mary Johnson's singing and the strength of her territorial claim. Even briefly listening to this film helps to explain why it was important that Taillefer was a good singer.

Note

A number of people have generously helped me as I explored terrain and materials with which I had little familiarity. I would like to thank in particular Dara Culhane, Sakej Henderson, Gwynneth Jones, John Lutz, Val Napoleon, Derek Neal, Adele Perry, Eric Reiter, and Michael Slivitsky.

49. Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Tribal Council and Hugh Brody, Toni Strabsurt, and Richard Overtsall, *On Indian Land Gitksan & Wet'suwet'en Territory* (Hazelton, BC: Office of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs and Scope Films, 1988). The film is difficult to come by, but there is a copy in the X̱wí7̱x̱wa Library in the First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia.

50. Bette Charlene Werner, "Romantic Lyrics in Landscape: Constable and Wordsworth," *Comparative Literature* 36.2 (1984): 110–29.

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RICHARD FIRTH GREEN,
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ABOUT THE EDITORS
AND CONTRIBUTORS

FIONA SOMERSET is Professor of English and Director of Medieval Studies at the University of Connecticut. Her books include *Feeling Like Saints: Lollard Writings after Wyclif* (2014), *Wycliffite Spirituality* in the Classics of Western Spirituality series (2013; with J. Patrick Hornbeck II and Stephen E. Lahey), and *Four Wycliffite Dialogues*, Early English Text Society, 333 (2009), the essay collection *Lollards and Their Influence in Late Medieval England* (2003; with Jill C. Havens and Derrick G. Pitard), and *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (1998). After working intensively on lollard writings for the past few years, she is now focusing on the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries as she develops research for a new book on the history of consent. She and Nicholas Watson previously coedited *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity* (2003).

NICHOLAS WATSON is Professor of English at Harvard University. His books include an edition and a translation of John of Morigny's *Liber florum celestis doctrine, or Book of the Flowers of Heavenly Teaching* (both with Claire Fanger; forthcoming 2015, 2016), *Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman* and *A Revelation of Love* (with Jacqueline Jenkins; 2005), *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1520* (with Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans; 1999), *Richard Rolle's Emendatio vitae, Orationes ad honorem nominis Ihesu* (1995), *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works* (with Anne Savage; 1991), and *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (1991). He is working on a book called "Balaam's Ass: Vernacular Theology before the English Reformation." He is a former Guggenheim Fellow and Fellow of the Radcliffe Institute. He and Fiona Somerset previously coedited *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity* (2003).

RICHARD FIRTH GREEN is Humanities Distinguished Professor of English at The Ohio State University. He is the author of *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian*

England (1999), and *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (1980). He is also coeditor of *Interstices: Studies in Middle English and Anglo-Latin Texts in Honour of A. G. Rigg* (with Linne R. Mooney; 2004), and *The Singer and the Scribe: European Ballad Traditions and European Ballad Cultures* (with Philip Bennett; 2004). His current research focuses on popular culture and the supernatural in the Middle Ages. He is a former Guggenheim Fellow and a former president of the New Chaucer Society.

THOMAS HAHN is Professor of English at the University of Rochester and General Editor of the Chaucer Bibliographies. He is the editor of *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales* for the TEAMS (2002 [1995]) and of several essay collections, including *Race and Ethnicity in the Middle Ages*, *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31.1 (2001), *Robin Hood in Popular Culture: Violence, Transgression, and Justice* (2000), and *Retelling Stories: Structure, Context, and Innovation in Traditional Narratives* (with Alan Lupack; 1997). His work focuses on the sponsorship, production, and interpretation of texts and images from the earlier Middle Ages through the early modern period.

BARBARA A. HANAWALT is Professor Emerita of History at The Ohio State University. Her books include *The Wealth of Wives: Women, Law, and the Economy in Late Medieval London* (2007), *Growing Up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History* (1993), *The Ties That Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (1986), and *Crime and Community in Medieval England, 1300–1348* (1979). Her research has been on medieval English social history: she is currently completing a book on civic ceremonial and the development of a civic culture in late-medieval London. Most recently she has held a National Endowment for the Humanities Senior Research Fellowship (2010).

MICHAEL JOHNSTON is Associate Professor of English at Purdue University. He is the author of *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England* (2014), and editor of *Robert Thornton and His Books* (with Susanna Fein; 2014), and of a special issue of *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Teaching* (2012). He has published essays in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (2013), *Journal of the Early Book Society* (2012), and *Viator* (2012). His research focuses on the intersection of literary history and manuscript history.

KATHLEEN E. KENNEDY is Associate Professor of English at the Pennsylvania State University–Brandywine. She is the author of *Medieval Hackers* (2014), *The Courtly and Commercial Art of the Wycliffite Bible* (2014), and *Maintenance, Meed, and Marriage in Medieval English Literature* (2009). She has articles in *Speculum*, “Reintroducing the English Books of Hours, or ‘English Primers’” (2014) and *Journal of British Studies*, “Prosopography of the Book and the Politics of Legal Language in Late Medieval England” (2014). Her interests range from law and literature to codicology and book history.

LISA J. KISER is Professor of English at The Ohio State University. She is the author of *Telling Classical Tales: Chaucer and the Legend of Good Women* (1983), and *Truth and Textuality in Chaucer’s Poetry* (1991). She also edited volumes 14–20 of *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* (1992–98). Her current research interests include medieval environmental history and animal–human relationships.

ROBYN MALO is Associate Professor of English at Purdue University. She is the author of *Relics and Writing in Late Medieval England* (2013), and editor of *The Sacred Object, The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 44.1 (with Shannon Gayk; 2014). Her articles include "Penitential Discourse in Hoccleve's Series" (*Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 2012), and "The Pardoner's Relics (And Why They Matter the Most)" (*Chaucer Review*, 2008). Her work focuses on late-medieval religious literature and material culture, including pilgrimage and Wycliffism. Current projects include a book on vernacular penitence in late-medieval England.

ALASTAIR MINNIS is Douglas Tracy Smith Professor of English at Yale University. His many books include *Translations of Authority in Medieval English Literature: Valuing the Vernacular* (2009), *Fallible Authors: Chaucer's Pardoner and Wife of Bath* (2007), *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (rev. ed. 2009, 2nd ed. 1988, 1st ed. 1984), *Magister Amoris: The "Roman de la Rose" and Vernacular Hermeneutics* (2001), and *Chaucer's Shorter Poems* (2000 [1995]), and he has engaged in extensive collaborative work on editing, translating, and explaining medieval literary criticism. His research methodology brings together reading strategies from literary criticism and the history of ideas, and an interest in medieval philosophy and theology has informed much of his work.

ANDREW TAYLOR is professor of English at the University of Ottawa. He is the author of *The Songs and Travels of a Tudor Minstrel* (2012) and *Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and Their Readers* (2002); and editor (with Robert Boenig) of *The Canterbury Tales*, and of the collections *The Future of the Page* (with Peter Stoicheff; 2004) and *The Tongue of the Fathers: Gender and Ideology in Medieval Latin* (with David Townsend; 1998). He is currently working on two interrelated projects: a study of the ways aristocratic readers in late-medieval England used books as a source of solace and as a tool to shape their identities, and, in collaboration with Richard Rastall of the University of Leeds, a history of English minstrels.

M. J. TOSWELL is Professor in the Department of English and Writing Studies at the University of Western Ontario, Canada. She is the author of *The Anglo-Saxon Psalter* (Brepols, 2014), and translator of Jorge Luis Borges, *Ancient Germanic Literatures*, Old English Publications 1 (Old English Newsletter at ACMRS, 2014). Her interests include Old English, early-medieval codicology, speculative fiction, and medievalism.

MICHAEL VAN DUSSEN is Assistant Professor of English Literature at McGill University. He is the author of *From England to Bohemia: Heresy and Communication in the Later Middle Ages* (2012) and editor of *Religious Controversy in Europe, 1378–1536: Textual Transmission and Networks of Readership* (with Pavel Soukup; 2013). His research focuses on later-medieval religious controversy and manuscript studies. He has received research grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and the Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture (FQRSC).

STEPHEN M. YEAGER is Assistant Professor of English at Concordia University. He is the author of *From Lawmen to Plowmen: Anglo-Saxon Legal Tradition and the School of Langland* (forthcoming) and author of several articles, including "Lollardy in Mum

and the Sothsegger: A Reconsideration" (*Yearbook of Langland Studies* 25), and "Diplomatic Antiquarianism and the Manuscripts of *Lazamon's Brut*" (*Arthuriana* 25.2). His research explores the influence of Anglo-Saxon vernacular literacy on later-medieval poetry, and focuses in particular on the intermediary role played by Anglo-Saxon documentary and legal traditions.

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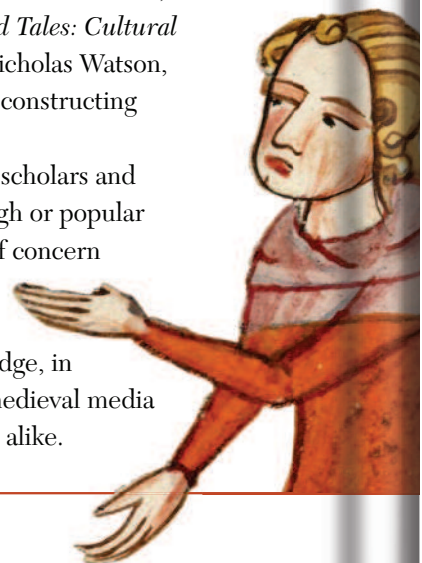


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Fiona Somerset is professor of English and medieval studies at the University of Connecticut.

Nicholas Watson is professor of English and medieval studies at Harvard University.

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